

The Israelite-Judahite Struggle for the Patrimony of Ancient Israel

The Bible describes the people of Israel as a single entity, from the time of its emergence as nation in Egypt, the wanderings through the desert and the conquest of Canaan, to its peak during the United Monarchy, when all twelve tribes were included within the unifying political, religious and cultural bounds of the monarchy. Although the name “Israel” was associated for about two hundred years only with the Northern Kingdom, while the kingdom to its south was called by a different name, for many years scholars assumed that the notion of unity had been preserved throughout the long period of the monarchical division. The names “Israel” and “Israelites” were therefore extended to the early history of Israel and the United Monarchy, as well as to the Kingdom of Judah and its inhabitants throughout the monarchical period and beyond.

Questions about the primordial unity of Israel, however, have been raised since the 1990s. Today, it is widely accepted that biblical historiography — which extended the name “Israel” to cover both kingdoms, collectively designating their inhabitants “Israelites” — did not, in fact, appear prior to the annexation of the Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrian empire in 720 BCE¹, and that the extension of the name “Israel” in the prophetic literature to include the Kingdom of Judah and its inhabitants dates no earlier than 720

¹ P.R. DAVIES, *In Search of Ancient Israel* (JSOTSup 148; Sheffield 1992) 11-74; idem, *The Origins of Biblical Israel* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 485; New York – London 2007) 1-24; I. FINKELSTEIN – N.A. SILBERMAN, *The Bible Unearthed. Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York 2001) 243-250; idem, *David and Solomon. In Search of the Bible’s Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* (New York 2006) 129-149; idem, “Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology”, *JSOT* 30 (2006) 259-285; W.M. SCHNIEDEWIND, *How the Bible became a Book. The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge 2004) 68-90; R.G. KRATZ, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* (London – New York 2005) 181-182, 209, 218-219, 304-306, 309-319.

BCE². The worshipping of the same national god in the two kingdoms was a major factor in the formation of a unified identity. At a certain historical moment — yet to be established — Judahite scribes and the elite may have felt that the two entities belonged together. With this in mind, they cleared the name “Israel” of its former specific geographical and national-political connotations, and imprinted upon it a new cultural and religious meaning. “Israel” became the name for the unified entity of the people of God of both Israel and Judah, and the object of the divine blessing and judgement. In the historiographical domain, the new concept of Israel was projected upon the early history of Israel and served as the name of the wider ethnic-religious entity around which the early history of Israel was woven.

Recently, some scholars have suggested that use of the name “Israel” to denote the two kingdoms predated the Assyrian conquest. Reinhard Kratz, for example, suggested that in the Books of Hosea and Amos the name “Israel” already refers to the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah³. However, the few references that appear to support this suggestion (i.e. Hos 10,11; 12,1; Amos 7,2.5.8; 8,2) are ambiguous, and his interpretation of the textual evidence is not compelling⁴. We may recall that during the 8th century, Israel and Judah fought each other twice: during the reign of Joash of Israel and Amaziah of Judah, and that of Pekah of Israel and Ahaz of Judah, respectively. Indeed, there is no evidence that relations between the two kingdoms were even cordial at any stage during the final years of the Kingdom of Israel⁵. Thus the assumption that — in

² This observation was already made by G.B. GRAY, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah I-XXVII* (ICC; Edinburgh 1912) 87; L. ROST, *Israel bei den Propheten* (BWANT IV/19; Stuttgart 1937) 41-47. For recent discussions, see J. HØGENHAVEN, *Gott und Volk bei Jesaja*. Untersuchung zur Biblischen Theologie (Acta Theologica Danica 24; Leiden 1988) 10-14, 17-22; R.G. KRATZ, “Israel als Staat und als Volk”, *ZTK* 97 (2000) 8-17; idem, “Israel in the Book of Isaiah”, *JSOT* 31 (2006) 111, 114, 123.

³ KRATZ, “Israel in Isaiah”, 116-117. The suggestion was already made by J. JEREMIAS, “Jacob im Amosbuch”, *Hosea und Amos*. Studien zu den Anfängen des Dodekapropheten (FAT 13; Tübingen 1996) 257-271.

⁴ For a different interpretation of the texts, see HØGENHAVEN, *Gott und Volk*, 20-22; W.D. WHITT, “The Jacob Traditions in Hosea and their Relation to Genesis”, *ZAW* 103 (1991) 20-23.

⁵ For the suggestion that there was enmity between the two kingdoms in the

stark contrast to political reality — the two prophets would begin to regard the inhabitants of the two rival kingdoms as one nation is, to my mind, highly unlikely.

Jesper Høgenhaven⁶ and Hugh Williamson⁷ have suggested that the divine title “The Holy One of Israel” had been part of the Jerusalem liturgy well before the time of Isaiah. However, Kratz recently demonstrated that this title does not, in fact, belong to the older layer of the prophecies of Isaiah, but was inserted by a redactor at a later stage of the composition⁸.

An inscription discovered in a cave at Khirbet Beit Lei — about 8 km. east of Lachish — reads as follows: “YHWH is the God of the whole? earth. The mountains of Judah belong to the God of Jerusalem” יהוה אלהי כל? הארץ. הרי יהודה לאלהי ירושלם⁹. Another inscription from this place reads: “Attend, YH, gracious God! Acquit, YH, YHWH!” חנן נקה יה יהוה, פקד יה אל¹⁰. The inscriptions are dated to about 700 BCE — the time of Sennacherib’s campaign against Judah, and coincide with the later years of Isaiah’s prophecy. Although the list of divine titles used in the cult of Jerusalem was certainly longer, the two texts illustrate the kind of divine titles common in Judah and Jerusalem at that time. The title

time of Jeroboam and Uzziah, see N. NA’AMAN, “Azariah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel”, *VT* 43 (1993) 230-232.

⁶ HØGENHAVEN, *Gott und Volk*, 57.

⁷ H.G.M. WILLIAMSON, “Isaiah and the Holy One of Israel”, *Biblical Hebrews, Biblical Texts. Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman* (eds. A. RAPOPORT-ALBERT – G. GREEBERG) (JSOTSup 333; Sheffield 2001) 33-35.

⁸ KRATZ, “Israel in Isaiah”, 122-127.

⁹ J. NAVEH, “Old Hebrew Inscriptions in a Burial Cave”, *IEJ* 13 (1963) 81-85; idem, “Hebrew Graffiti from the First Temple Period”, *IEJ* 51 (2001) 197; A. LEMAIRE, “Prières en temps de crise: Les inscriptions de Khirbet Beit Lei”, *RB* 83 (1976) 558-560; J. RENZ, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik* I. Die althebräischen Inschriften. Part 1: Text und Kommentar (eds. J. RENZ – W. RÖLLIG) (Darmstadt 1995) 245-246. For different readings, see F.M. CROSS, “The Cave Inscriptions from Khirbet Beit Lei”, *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century. Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck* (ed. J.A. SANDERS) (Garden City, NY 1970) 299-302; F.W. DOBBS-ALLSOPP – J.J.M. ROBERTS – C.J. SEOW – R.E. WHITAKER, *Hebrew Inscriptions. Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven – London 2005) 128-130.

¹⁰ DOBBS-ALLSOPP et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions*, 130-131, with earlier literature.

“holy” — possibly repeated three times — was undoubtedly used even before the time of Isaiah. But the divine title “the Holy One of Israel” must have originated after the fall of the Kingdom of Israel (720 BCE).

The neighbouring kingdoms’ shared cult of YHWH has always figured prominently in explaining why the name “Israel” was extended to include Judah. Philip Davies explained the emergence of “biblical Israel” as an effort by fifth-century scribes to forge a common past for the new society of mixed origins that the Persian authorities had transplanted in the province of Yehud, in a bid to persuade the new settlers that they were being settled in their “homeland”¹¹. However, the picture of a community of deportees of mixed origin, settled by the Persian authorities in the province of Yehud, for whose sake the history was being written, has no basis in the evidence. Sensing, perhaps, that this explanation for the formation of “biblical Israel” was unsatisfactory, Davies came up with a new solution. In his historical reconstruction, from the 9th century BCE onwards, the district of Benjamin was incorporated into the territory of Israel, and was handed over to Judah by Sargon II following his conquest and annexation of Samaria in 720 BCE. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 BCE, the centre shifted to Mizpah, where the first comprehensive historiographical work was written. This early work underlined the military leadership of Benjamin among the Israelite tribes (excluding Judah) and concluded with the death of Saul on Mount Gilboa. The Deuteronomistic History was written in response to this presumably early Benjaminite composition, extensively reworking elements within the earlier work, and creating, in the process, the literary entity of “biblical Israel” as we know it from biblical historiography¹².

¹¹ DAVIES, *In Search*, 75-93. For criticism, see S. JAPHET, “Can the Persian Period Bear the Burden? Reflections on the Origins of Biblical History”, *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies*. Division A: The Bible and Its World (ed. R. MARGOLIN) (Jerusalem 1999) 35*-45*.

¹² P.R. DAVIES, “The Origin of Biblical Israel”, *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context. A Tribute to Nadav Na’aman* (eds. Y. AMIT – E. BEN ZVI – I. FINKELSTEIN – O. LIPSCHITS) (Winona Lake, IN 2006) 141-148; idem, *Origins of Biblical Israel*, 105-126; idem, “The Trouble with Benjamin”, *Reflection and Refraction. Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (eds. R. REZETKO et al.) (SVT 113; Leiden 2007) 93-111.

I have already written a detailed criticism of Davies' premise that the district of Benjamin was incorporated into the Kingdom of Israel at some point during the 9th or 8th centuries¹³. In point of fact, the territory of Judah did encompass the district of Benjamin — with the exception of the Jericho-Gilgal-Michmash area — throughout the First Temple period. The hypothesis that a comprehensive Benjaminite historical work with a northern Israelite orientation predated the Deuteronomistic History has no evidential foundation. Moreover, the notion that after the fall of the First Temple, a Benjaminite author would depict the history of Israel from a northern Israelite perspective is unlikely. Benjamin was a Judahite district, and the outlook of its inhabitants was clearly Judahite, not Israelite.

Axel Knauf has suggested that the district of Benjamin, including the city of Bethel, was handed over to Judah by Assyria during the reign of Manasseh as a reward for his long-standing loyalty, and that the cultic centre at Bethel was the means by which Israelite traditions were channelled to Judah¹⁴. However, this hypothesis, too, is not supported by the textual evidence¹⁵. Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that an Assyrian king would have detached such an important administrative and cultic centre from his territory and assign it to a vassal kingdom. The area of Bethel was annexed to the Kingdom of Judah only following the Assyrian withdrawal from Palestine, probably in the 620s BCE. If Bethel is indeed the missing link in the transmission of Israelite traditions to the kingdom of Judah, its incorporation into the kingdom did not take place prior to King Josiah's reign (see below).

Might the common worship of the same national god account by itself for the creation of a detailed historical composition of an ethnic-religious entity called "Israel" that had supposedly been born at the dawn of history and had functioned without significant internal change up until that time? Since at no time before the Hasmonaean period were the inhabitants of the two kingdoms ever united in a single national entity, the answer is clearly negative. To

¹³ N. NA'AMAN, "Saul, Benjamin and the Emergence of Biblical Israel", *ZAW* 121 (2009) 216-224.

¹⁴ E.A. KNAUF, "Bethel: The Israelite Impact on Judean Language and Literature", *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (eds. O. LIPSCHITS – M. OEMING) (Winona Lake, IN 2006) 295-297, 314-316.

¹⁵ NA'AMAN, "Saul", 339.

clarify the formation of “biblical Israel” as depicted in biblical historiography, we must first clarify the following questions: What did the authors of these historiographical works seek to gain by describing the history of Israel in this manner? Under what circumstances was the name “Israel” extended to include the Kingdom of Judah and its inhabitants? Did this begin at the time of the monarchy — or only after its downfall, when the name “Judah”, like “Israel”, had also lost its political-territorial connotation?

Internal biblical research to date has not satisfactorily explained the emergence of the concept of united Israel in biblical historiography. To find a way out of the deadlock, we must look outside the narrow confines of the biblical text. To this end, in the following sections I shall draw an analogy with Assyrian-Babylonian relations in the second millennium and first half of the first millennium BCE. This, I believe, sheds new light on the decision of Judahite scribes and the elite to extend the names “Israel” and “Israelites” to their own country and its people, and may even help to establish when this religious-ideological shift occurred.

I. The Assyrian-Babylonian Struggle over the Political and Cultural Heritage of Mesopotamia

Scribal activity and learning in Mesopotamia began in its southern regions, with the first intelligible texts written in Sumerian. The city of Uruk was probably the major political centre where writing and learning first developed, and spread from there to other urban centres — first in lower Mesopotamia, then further upstream, along the river valleys, to the north (Assyria) and the west (Mari) and Ebla. In the late third millennium BCE the centre of learning shifted to Ur, where writing was fully integrated into the administrative system, and a great variety of Sumerian texts were produced within the walls of the local scribal schools. In the latter part of the third millennium, writing in Akkadian also developed, gradually becoming the preferred language of scribes by the Old Babylonian period. From the early second millennium BCE onwards, Sumerian was confined to schools and studied by scribes as part of their training. A full command of Akkadian and Sumerian became the standard requirement for students seeking to join the “guild” of professional scribes in Mesopotamia.

As early as the third millennium BCE, the city of Nippur held the supreme religious position in Mesopotamia. Its god, Enlil, was worshipped as the supreme deity in the Sumerian pantheon, and the city was seen as the place where the gods assembled to take important decisions. Rulers seeking supreme power in Mesopotamia claimed that they were favoured by the god Enlil. Nippur bore the epithet *Dur-anki* — “the bond of heaven and earth/underworld” — and was regarded as the centre of the universe¹⁶. The concept of the “navel of the world” refers to the “sacred hill” (DU₆.KÙ) — a primeval hill which formed the nucleus from where all things originated, and was the bond linking heaven and earth. This axis mundi was the site of Ekur, the temple of Enlil in Nippur¹⁷.

With the rise of Babylon as Babylonia’s political capital in the first half of the second millennium BCE, Nippur maintained its supreme religious status, and the god Enlil continued to head the Mesopotamian pantheon. Hammurabi’s conquests (c. 1728-1686) made Babylon the centre of a great kingdom, and his victories raised the status of Marduk, the local god of Babylon. But this promotion features mainly in contemporary royal inscriptions of Babylon, while documents from the Old Babylonian period show that Marduk did not occupy a prominent position at that time in the Sumerian-Babylonian pantheon¹⁸. Babylon’s political dominance of

¹⁶ W.G. LAMBERT, “Nippur in Ancient Ideology”, *Nippur in the Centennial*. Papers Read at the XXXV^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, (ed. M. DEJONG ELLIS) (Philadelphia, PA 1992) 119-120; J.G. WESTENHOLZ, “The Theological Foundation of the City, the Capital City and Babylon”, *Capital Cities*. Urban Planning and Spiritual Dimensions. Proceedings of the Symposium Held on May 27-29, 1996, Jerusalem, Israel, (ed. J.G. WESTENHOLZ) (Jerusalem 1996) 45-46; S.W. COLE, *Nippur in Late Assyrian Times c. 755-612 BC* (SAAS 4; Helsinki 1996) 7-12; W. SALLABERGER, “Nippur als religiöses Zentrum Mesopotamiens im historischen Wandel”, *Die orientalische Stadt*. Kontinuität, Wandel, Bruch. 1. Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft (ed. G. Wilhelm) (Saarbrücken 1997) 147-168.

¹⁷ S.M. MAUL, “Die altorientalische Hauptstadt – Abbild und Nabel der Welt”, *Die orientalische Stadt* (ed. G. WILHELM) 114-122; A.R. GEORGE, “‘Bond of the Lands’: Babylon, the Cosmic Capital”, *ibid.*, 128-133.

¹⁸ For the rise of Marduk to the top of the Babylonian pantheon, see W. SOMMERFELD, *Der Aufstieg Marduks*. Die Stellung Marduks in der babylonischen Religion des zweiten Jahrtausends v. Chr. (AOAT 213; Kevelaer – Neukirchen-Vluyn 1982); idem, “Marduk”, *RLA* 7 (1987-1990) 360-370;

lower Mesopotamia was not, therefore, echoed in the status of its god. Although Nippur had lost its important political position many years earlier, Enlil's position at the head of the Babylonian pantheon remained firm until the 12th century BCE¹⁹.

The decisive stage in the rise of Marduk to the head of the Babylonian pantheon came about following developments in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104)²⁰. Details of the historical events, as well as the textual evidence for the literary-theological conflict between the priests and authors of Babylon and Nippur in the late 12th century, are beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that Nebuchadnezzar's successful campaign to bring the statue of Marduk back from Elam helped him and his elite in their efforts to elevate their city's god in the Babylonian pantheon to a status befitting that of Babylon's primacy in the kingdom²¹.

Inevitably, the question arises as to the time of the composition *Enūma eliš* — the Babylonian creation epic depicting Marduk's elevation to the top of the Babylonian pantheon, and by extension, Babylon as the navel of the world (positions previously occupied by Enlil and Nippur, respectively). The earliest copies of the work date from the first millennium BCE, and most scholars agree that it is a

W.G. LAMBERT, "Studies in Marduk", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47 (1984) 1-9; T. ABUSCH, "Marduk", *Dictionary of Deities and Demons* (eds. K. VAN DER TOORN – B. BECKING – P.W. VAN DER HORST) (Leiden 1999) 543-549, with earlier literature.

¹⁹ GEORGE, "Bond", 132-133.

²⁰ W.G. LAMBERT, "The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion", *The Seed of Wisdom. Essays in Honor of T. J. Meek* (ed. W.S. McCULLOUGH) (Toronto 1964) 3-13; idem, "Studies in Marduk", 2-5; SOMMERFELD, *Der Aufstieg Marduks*, 182-189; A.R. GEORGE, "Marduk and the Cult of the Gods of Nippur at Babylon", *Or* 66 (1997) 65-70.

²¹ J.A. BRINKMAN, *A History of Post Kassite Babylonia (1158-722 B.C.)* (AnOr 43; Rome 1968) 104-116, 325-329; idem, "Nebukadnezzar I.", *RLA* 9 (1998-2001) 192-194; J.J.M. ROBERTS, "Nebuchadnezzar I's Elamite Crisis in Theological Perspective", *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein* (ed. M. DEJONG ELLIS) (Hamden, CT 1977) 183-187; V.A. HUROWITZ, "Some Literary Observations on the Šitti-Marduk Kudurru (BBSt. 6)", *ZA* 82 (1992) 39-59; G. FRAME, *Rulers of Babylonia. From the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination (1157-612 BC)* (RIMB 2; Toronto 1995) 9-35, with earlier literature.

post-Kassite composition, of the time of Nebuchadnezzar I or of one of his successors on the Babylonian throne²².

Ashur was initially a mountain deity, and when the local inhabitants built a city at the site they named it after him²³. When the city attained political power, probably in the reign of Shamshi-Addu I (c. 1742-1711), the local god was modelled after Enlil, the head of the southern Mesopotamian pantheon. Many elements of the cult of Enlil were transferred to Assyria, including the names of temples, chapels and gates, as well as cultic rites and rituals²⁴. Temples were consecrated to Ashur as Enlil, and the Assyrian king saw himself as Enlil's representative. Finally, the concept of the "navel of the world" was also conferred upon the city of Ashur. Many building names, royal title, rites and cultic practices, even religious theology, all originally from Nippur, may be found in first millennium Assyria, attesting to the great impact that Nippur and its god had on Assyrian cult and culture from the time of Shamshi-Addu onwards.

The growth of Babylon under Hammurabi and his successors blocked the rise of the Assyrian power for many centuries. Babylonia held the political power and dominated the religious and cultural heritage of Mesopotamia until the 13th century, and remained the centre of learning and scribal activity throughout the second millennium BCE. Assyria began to recover in the 14th century and gradually started expanding in the 14th-13th centuries. It soon clashed with its southern neighbour, and the two kingdoms fought several times in an effort to gain the supreme power in Mesopotamia. This struggle reached its climax in the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I (c. 1235-1199), who invaded Babylonia, defeated its troops, captured its king, conquered Babylon and sacked it.

With military superiority secured, Tukulti-Ninurta made several moves to demonstrate that he was a legitimate Babylonian ruler, and that his country was well versed in Babylonian cult and culture²⁵. He

²² LAMBERT, "Reign of Nebuchadnezzar", 3-6; idem, "Studies in Marduk", 4; idem, "Nippur", 120-122; SOMMERFELD, *Der Aufstieg Marduks*, 174-181; ABUSCH, "Marduk", 547-548; S. DALLEY, "Statues of Marduk and the Date of Enūma eliš", *AoF* 24 (1997) 163-171.

²³ W.G. LAMBERT, "The God Aššur", *Iraq* 45 (1983) 82-86.

²⁴ MAUL, "Die altorientalische Hauptstadt", 121-123.

²⁵ P. MACHINIST, "Literature and Politics: The Tukulti-Ninurta Epic and the

removed the statue of Marduk from Esagil to Ashur and celebrated the Akitu festival there in honour of Marduk, thereby introducing the Babylonian cult-tradition to Assyria. He elevated the god Ashur over the Babylonian Marduk as the “Assyrian Enlil”, and adopted several new epithets and titles of Babylonian origin in his inscriptions. He transported a rich collection of Babylonian scholarly texts to Assyria in a bid to make it a centre of learning²⁶. Finally, Assyrian scribes composed original literary works that creatively reworked Babylonian themes and structures, the most remarkable of which is the Tukulti-Ninurta Epos²⁷.

In response, Babylonian scribes composed propagandist works presenting Assyria as a subordinate kingdom of Babylonia, and its rulers as lacking talent and respectability²⁸. This “war of the tablets” clearly indicates that the Assyrian-Babylonian struggle was not only for political and military superiority, but also over hegemony over their shared religion and culture.

However, Tukulti-Ninurta’s attempt to shift the political, cultic and cultural centre from Babylonia to Assyria did not last long. After his death, Assyria weakened and Babylonia regained its independence. Nebuchadnezzar I’s military success consolidated Babylonia’s political position and it regained its position as the centre of cult and scholarship in Mesopotamia for a long time to come.

Bible”, *CBQ* 38 (1976) 455-477; idem, *The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I. A Study in Middle Assyrian Literature* (PhD Dissertation; Yale University 1978) 509-531; idem, “The Assyrians and Their Babylonian Problem: Some Reflections”, *Jahrbuch des Wissenschaftskollegs zu Berlin* (ed. P. WAPNEWSKI) (Berlin 1984-1985) 361-362; M. LIVERANI, *Prestige and Interest. International Relations in the near East ca. 1600-1100 B.C.* (Padova 1990) 156-159.

²⁶ For the series of tablets brought to Ashur, see MACHINIST, *Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta*, 28-129, 366-373.

²⁷ For a recent translation of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epos, see B.R. FOSTER, *Before the Muses. An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, MD 32005) 298-317.

²⁸ J. LLOP – A.R. GEORGE, “Die babylonisch-assyrischen Beziehungen und die innere Lage Assyriens in der Zeit der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Ninurta-Tukulti-Aššur und Mutakkil-Nusku nach neuen keilschriftlichen Quellen”, *AfO* 48-49 (2001-2002) 1-23; E. FRAHM, “On Some Recently Published Late Babylonian Copies of Royal Letters”, *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* 2005, no. 43, with earlier literature.

With the re-emergence of Assyria as the leading Mesopotamian power in the early part of the first millennium BCE, Babylon's continued supremacy in Mesopotamian cult and culture once again became increasingly unbearable for the Assyrians. The religious stature of Ashur, the Assyrian national god, was not yet commensurate with Assyria's political dominance in the region, nor was Esharra, his principal temple in the city of Ashur, yet elevated to a status worthy of a seat of the chief imperial deity.

It is against this backdrop that Sennacherib's religious reforms must be interpreted. These have been widely discussed elsewhere²⁹, and require only a brief summary:

A) Sennacherib destroyed the city of Babylon and removed its ashes and the statue of Marduk to Ashur, the Assyrian religious-cultural capital. There he built a temple (*bīt akītu*) outside the city, in which he deposited the ashes from the devastated city. In this manner, he tried to refute the Babylonian claim that the axis mundi resided in Marduk's temple of Esagil, and shifted it to Ashur, making it the new "axis of the world", and seat of the king of the gods³⁰.

²⁹ H. ZIMMERN, "Marduks (Ellils, Assurs) Geburt im babylonischen Weltschöpfungsepos", *MVAG* 21 (1917) 213-225; H. TADMOR – B. LANDSBERGER – S. PARPOLA, "The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib's Last Will", *SAAB* 3 (1989) 25-51; P. MACHINIST, "The Assyrians", 353-364; H. TADMOR, "Monarchy and the Elite in Assyria and Babylonia: The Question of Royal Accountability", *The Origin and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (ed. S.N. EISENSTADT) (Albany, GA 1986) 203-224; A. LIVINGSTONE, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (Oxford 1986) 205-235; A.R. GEORGE, "Sennacherib and the Tablet of Destinies", *Iraq* 48 (1986) 133-146; W.G. LAMBERT, "The Assyrian Recension of Enūma Eliš", *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten* (ed. H. WAETZOLDT – H. HAUPTMANN) (Heidelberg 1997) 77-79; E. FRAHM, *Einleitung in die Sanherib-Inschriften* (AfO Beiheft 26; Horn 1997) 220-227, 282-288; idem, "Sanherib und die Tempel von Kuyunjik", *Tikip santaki mala bašmu*. Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag (ed. S.M. MAUL) (Groningen 1998) 114-117; G.W. VERA CHAMAZA, *Die Omnipotenz Aššurs*. Entwicklungen in der Aššur-Theologie unter den Sargoniden Sargon II., Sanherib und Asarhaddon (AOAT 295; Münster 2002) 111-167; N. NA'AMAN, "The King Leading Cult Reforms in his Kingdom: Josiah and Other Kings in the Ancient Near East", *ZAR* 12 (2006) 155-158.

³⁰ D.D. LUCKENBILL, *Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago, IL 1924) 136-139 lines 22-35, 44-57; E. EBELING, *Stiftungen und Vorschriften für assyrische Tempel* (Berlin 1954) 3-5; FRAHM, *Einleitung* 173-174; L. KATAJA – R. WHITING, *Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period* (SAA XII;

B) Sennacherib celebrated the Babylonian New Year's festival in Ashur and reworked the Babylonian epic of creation (Enūma eliš), which formed the theological basis for the festival. The name of Ashur was spelled AN.ŠĀR — a god who, in the Babylonian theogony, preceded Marduk's elevation to the top of the Babylonian pantheon. Thus, in the new epic of creation, the god Ashur, spelled AN.ŠĀR, replaced Marduk as the creator and leader of the gods. A copper relief was affixed to the temple gates, depicting the war and the victory over Tiamat and the gods who assisted her. The subject of the relief was taken from the Babylonian creation myth, but with Ashur replacing Marduk in the role of the victorious god³¹.

C) During the reign of Sennacherib, literary works were composed to exalt the god Ashur by casting him in the image of the Babylonian god Marduk. In some inscriptions the god Ashur bears Marduk's former titles, while Marduk's own titles in these texts reveal a striking demotion in status³².

However, like Tukulti-Ninurta before him, Sennacherib's efforts to establish the city of Ashur as the successor to Babylon as the centre of Mesopotamian religion and cult were short-lived. When Esarhaddon succeeded him on the Assyrian throne, he abruptly reversed his father's anti-Babylonian policy. While details of the Babylonian policy of Esarhaddon and of his son Ashurbanipal are irrelevant to this discussion³³, what is worthy of note is the

Helsinki 1995) 104-105; A.Y. AHMAD – A.K. GRAYSON, "Sennacherib in the Akitu House", *Iraq* 61 (1999) 187-189; MAUL, "Die altorientalische Hauptstadt", 123-124.

³¹ LUCKENBILL, *Annals of Sennacherib*, 139, 142; FRAHM, *Einleitung*, 223-224; B. PONGRATZ-LEISTEN, *Ina Šulmi Īrub*. Die Kulttopographische und ideologische Programmatik der akītu-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr. (Mainz 1994) 207-209.

³² See for example: LUCKENBILL, *Annals of Sennacherib*, 149, lines 1-6. An almost identical text was published by EBELING, *Stiftungen und Vorschriften*, 4, lines 7-11; FRAHM, *Einleitung*, 215-216, 220-221; GEORGE, "Tablet of Destinies", 139, 143.

³³ On Esarhaddon's religious policy toward Babylonia, see W.G. LAMBERT, "Esarhaddon's Attempt to Return Marduk to Babylon", *Ad bene et fideliter seminandum*. Festgabe für Karlheinz Deller (eds. G. MAUER – U. MAGEN) (AOAT 220; Kevelaer – Neukirchen-Vluyn 1988) 157-174; B.N. PORTER, *Images, Power, and Politics*. Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon's Babylonian Policy (Philadelphia, PA 1993); idem, "God's Statues as a Tool of Assyrian

formation of the Ashurbanipal Library, in which the entire corpus of Mesopotamian texts was assembled, its scope and systematization surpassing all Babylonian tablet collections before or since³⁴. This initiative, too, was indicative of the Assyrian efforts to gain the upper hand in the religious-cultural struggle with Babylonia for the prize of controlling the heritage of ancient Mesopotamia.

The Assyrian-Babylonian *Kulturkampf* has not escaped the attention of scholars, and Peter Machinist defined it as follows³⁵:

“These were in large measure over political identity, indeed, cosmological identity: which state, which capital — Babylon, Assur, Nineveh — would be the cosmic center? Put another way and focusing on the Assyrian ruling elites specifically, we may say that Babylonia was for these elites not simply a military or political problem of governance; it was also a problem of ownership of the cultural patrimony of Mesopotamia ... for Sennacherib what was ultimately at stake was the neutralization of the cultural/cosmic imperium that Babylon represented and its transfer to Assyria”.

Political Policy: Esarhaddon's Return of Marduk to Babylon”, *Religious Transformations and Socio-Political Change*. Eastern Europe and Latin America (ed. L. MARTIN) (Berlin 1993) 9-24; VERA CHAMAZA, *Die Omnipotenz Aššurs*, 168-242; M.P. STRECK, “Der Wiederaufbau Babylons unter Asarhaddon und Assurbanipal in Briefen aus Ninive”, *AoF* 29 (2002) 205-233; M. NISSINEN – S. PARPOLA, “Marduk's Return and Reconciliation in a Prophetic Letter from Arbela”, *Studia Orientalia* 99 (2004) 199-219.

³⁴ On the scope and contents of Ashurbanipal's library, see A.L. OPPENHEIM, *Ancient Mesopotamia*. Portrait of a Dead Civilization (Chicago, IL 1964) 15-24; S. PARPOLA, “Assyrian Library Records”, *JNES* 42 (1983) 1-29; idem, “The Royal Archives of Nineveh”, *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries* (ed. K.R. VEENHOF) (Leiden 1986) 223-236; S.J. LIEBERMAN, “Canonical and Official Cuneiform Texts: Towards an Understanding of Ashurbanipal's Personal Tablet Collection”, *Lingering over Words*. Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran (eds. T. ABUSCH – J. HUEHNERGARD – P. STEINKELLER) (Atlanta, GA 1990) 305-336; G.B. LANFRANCHI, “The Library at Nineveh”, *Capital Cities*, J.G. WESTENHOLZ (ed.) 147-156; G. FRAME – A.R. GEORGE, “The Royal Libraries of Nineveh: New Evidence for King Ashurbanipal's Tablet Collecting”, *Iraq* 67 (2005) 265-284. For the late date of the extant copies of the letters available for research, see FRAHM, “On Some”, 43-46.

³⁵ P. MACHINIST, “Final Response: On the Study of the Ancient Language, Writing and the State”, *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures* (ed. S.L. SANDERS) (Chicago, IL 2006) 296.

We have seen that the fundamental Mesopotamian religious concepts, its cult and culture were all born in the south. The repeated Assyrian efforts to shift the centre from the south to its domain might be interpreted as the attempt of an initially marginal and inferior kingdom to take over the heritage of its neighbour³⁶. The military prowess of the Assyrian empire guaranteed it temporary success during the time of the Sargonids. However, the Babylonians never acknowledged the superiority of Assyrian cult and culture, and as soon as the Assyrian empire collapsed, the centre of gravity reverted to its original owners.

II. The Emergence of “Biblical Israel” as a Religious-Cultural Phenomenon

Returning to the problem of the emergence of “biblical Israel”, we must first emphasize the overwhelming superiority of the Kingdom of Israel over Judah in all parameters of statehood — population, urbanization, monumental architecture, administration, economy and trade — from the time of its foundation and until its conquest and partial annexation by Tiglath-pileser III in 733/32 BCE. Indeed, most of the territory of Palestine — including all the thickly populated highlands districts (except for the district of Benjamin) — was incorporated into Israel’s territory. These included the Gilead and part of the Mishor, the Upper and Lower Galilee, the Jordan Valley, the northern plains of Jezreel and Beth-shean, the central hill country, the coast between the Carmel and Jarkon River and the northern Shephelah. Included in these districts were the territories of the former late Canaanite cities of the Lower Galilee (Chinnereth), the northern plains (Megiddo, Beth-shean, Rehob and Jokneam), the coast (Dor) and northern Shephelah (Gezer)³⁷. The territories within the Kingdom of Judah, on the other

³⁶ FRAHM (“Late Babylonian Copies”, 43, 45 n. 1) suggested that letter No 2 published by FRAME – GEORGE, “Royal Libraries of Nineveh”, 272-277, was sent by Ashurbanipal to the Babylonian scholars. Following his text corrections, line 30 of the letter might be translated as follows: “all the scribal learning from old days onwards is in Assyria as (it was) in Babylon”.

³⁷ For the Iron Age I network of Canaanite city-states and its destruction, see I. FINKELSTEIN, “City-States to State: Polity Dynamics in the 10th-9th Century B.C.E.”, *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past*. Canaan,

hand — such as the highlands of Judah, the Beersheba Valley and the Upper Shephelah — were largely peripheral and sparsely populated until the late 9th century BCE.

The Northern Kingdom was a multifaceted state, comprising a heterogeneous population of diversified ethnic origin and cultic and cultural traditions, including many descendants of the former Canaanite population. No wonder, therefore, that it absorbed many religious concepts and cultic and cultural elements of Canaanite origin. Moreover, Israel bordered culturally influential kingdoms such as Aram Damascus and Tyre, and gradually absorbed cultic and cultural elements from its neighbours. Judah, on the other hand, was demographically quite homogenous, made up of settled local groups with pastoral roots. It was much more isolated, having a common border with only the two continental Philistine kingdoms of Ekron and Gath. Well until the 8th century, it lagged in all aspects of state organization and urban culture far behind its northern neighbour³⁸.

During the 9th century several major cities in the Northern Kingdom were fortified (Hazor, Megiddo, Rehob, Jokneam, Jezreel, Dor and Gezer) and palaces as well as other public structures erected. By the 9th century the kingdom had evolved into what sociologists call a “mature state”: a well-developed territorial-political entity, with a settlement system comprising hundreds of settlements of various sizes. Not surprisingly, Israel is mentioned quite prominently in 9th century royal inscriptions of the kings of Assyria (Shalmaneser III, Adad-nirari III), Aram (Hazael) and Moab (Mesha).

By contrast, only a few dozen small, indigent settlements occupied the territory of Judah in the 9th century. Excavations in the City of David in Jerusalem have revealed scant traces of settlement during this period. That said, we must not forget the formidable challenges of excavating such a mountainous site, which has been

Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina. Proceedings of the Centennial Symposium, W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and American Schools of Oriental Research, Jerusalem, May 29-31, 2000 (eds. W.G. DEVER – S. GITIN) (Winona Lake, IN 2003) 75-83.

³⁸ I. FINKELSTEIN, “State Formation in Israel and Judah: A Contrast in Context, a Contrast in Trajectory”, *NEA* 62 (1999) 39-44.

continuously inhabited for thousands of years, and where each new settlement damaged the remains of its predecessors. Excavations carried out in the territory of Judah have uncovered several fortified cities from the 9th century (Beth-shemesh, Lachish, Tel Beersheba, Arad and Tell en-Naşbeh), indicating the existence of a central government and possibly an administrative apparatus in the kingdom at that time. It also indicates that the Judahite economy and trade were slowly and gradually developing in the second half of the 9th century, both at the primary centre of Jerusalem and at the secondary centres of the kingdom's frontiers³⁹. The kingdom — under the name “Beth David” — earned a minor mention in the Aramaic inscription of Tel Dan, in contrast to numerous references to Israel in 9th century royal inscriptions.

Only in the 8th century did a “mature” system of settlements evolve in the Kingdom of Judah, with habitations of various sizes, pointing to the emergence of a political, administrative and economical hierarchy. It was during this period that large fortifications, public edifices and items of luxury first appeared in Judah. This was also the time of the first mass production of pottery vessels in Judah, manufactured in central workshops and distributed to the periphery. The production of oil and wine similarly developed, progressing from the household level to larger, perhaps even national, scales⁴⁰.

Israel Finkelstein summed up the differences in the environmental and cultural background, and in the growth and development, of the two neighbouring kingdoms as follows⁴¹:

“Israel and Judah were two distinct territorial, socio-political and cultural phenomena. This dichotomy stemmed from their different

³⁹ S. BUNIMOVITZ – Z. LEDERMAN, “The Iron Age Fortifications of Tel Beth-Shemesh: A 1990-2000 Perspective”, *IEJ* 51 (2001) 144-147; I. FINKELSTEIN, “The Rise of Jerusalem and Judah: The Missing Link”, *Levant* 33 (2001) 108-111; D. USSISHKIN, “Jerusalem as a Royal and Cultic Center in the 10th-8th Centuries B.C.E.”, *Symbiosis, Symbolism* (eds. W.G. DEVER – S. GITIN) 534; R. REICH – E. SHUKRON – O. LERNAU, “Recent Discoveries in the City of David, Jerusalem”, *IEJ* 47 (2007) 153-160.

⁴⁰ D.W. JAMIESON-DRAKE, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah. A Socio-Archaeological Approach* (Sheffield 1991); FINKELSTEIN, “State Formation”, 39-48, with earlier literature; idem, “Rise of Jerusalem”, 105-115.

⁴¹ FINKELSTEIN, “State Formation”, 48.

environmental conditions and their contrasting history in the second millennium BCE. Israel was characterized by significant continuity in Bronze Age cultural traits, by heterogeneous population and by strong contacts with its neighbors. Judah was characterized by isolation and by local, Iron Age cultural features, as evidenced by the layout of its provincial administrative towns. Israel emerged as a full-blown state in the early 9th century BCE, together with Moab, Ammon and Aram Damascus, while Judah (and Edom) emerged about a century and a half later, in the second half of the 8th century”.

The discussion about the similarities and differences between the two kingdoms suffers from a notable lack of contemporary documents, and relies instead on the attributes of states that may be traced in the archaeological record. This is a serious hindrance when trying to draw analogies between Mesopotamia — where the relationship between Babylonia and Assyria were established mainly on the basis of texts — and that of Israel and Judah, where it was inferred mainly from the archaeological evidence. Nevertheless, with all due caution, I submit that the political-cultural relationship between the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel may be compared with that between Assyria and Babylonia. Like Babylonia, Israel was the territory where many statehood, cultic and cultural elements first emerged. In Mesopotamia, Assyria rose to become the dominant power and used its military supremacy to gain control over the cultic and culture heritage of ancient Mesopotamia; while in Palestine, following the annexation of Israel by Assyria, its patrimony was left vacant and Judah tried to absorb it and be considered the “genuine” Israel.

The thesis suggested here is that the adoption of the Israelite identity by the Judahite scribes and elite was motivated by the desire to take over the highly prestigious vacant heritage of the Northern Kingdom, just as Assyria had sought to take possession of the highly prestigious heritage of ancient Mesopotamia. It is further suggested that the *raison d'être* of this ideological and literary claim date to the time of the monarchy, when Judah was still in control of its territory, civil and religious institutions and self identity. The reasoning for this is that, following the destruction of Jerusalem and the incorporation of the kingdom into the Babylonian province system, Judah lost its former political-national identity, and from this time and until the successful revolt of the Hasmonaeans, it held the same administrative status as that of the province of Samerina.

The inhabitants of the province of Samerina would have seen themselves as the natural heirs of the patrimony of ancient Israel, and it would have been distinctly odd for Judean authors, living in the neighbouring province of Yehud, suddenly to start claiming a heritage that had never been their own.

When, therefore, was the new ethno-religious-cultural identity of “Israel” first adopted by Judahite historiographers and prophets to describe the inhabitants of both kingdoms? Might it be dated shortly after the Assyrian annexation of the Kingdom of Israel, in the late 8th – early 7th century BCE? This, too, is unlikely. Assyria had been the dominant power in the Syro-Palestinian arena for about a century, and forcefully governed the provinces established in the territories of the former Kingdom of Israel. Following Sennacherib’s destructive campaign of 701 BCE, Judah was a loyal vassal of Assyria and was mainly preoccupied in restoring its severely damaged territories. Under these circumstances, when Judah made efforts to strength its internal cohesion and re-consolidate its identity that were severely damaged by the Assyrian campaign, it is difficult to imagine that Judahite scribes and prophets would have sought a new identity and tried to absorb the heritage of what was now Assyrian-controlled territory.

The situation changed dramatically, however, after the Assyrian withdrawal from the Syro-Palestinian arena in the last third of the 7th century BCE. While the political status and institutions of Judah remained intact, the administrative frameworks and internal cohesion of the Assyrian provinces must have collapsed, and they had no army with which to defend themselves. Egypt was a sort of “successor state” for the territories vacated by Assyria, including Judah and the province of Samerina, but was mainly engaged in the coastal areas and could not effectively control the internal regions of Syria-Palestine. Josiah (639-609) was then king of Judah and was able to operate with no organized resistance in the highlands areas north of his kingdom, and expand into the former Israelite territories⁴².

⁴² N. NA'AMAN, “The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah”, *Tel Aviv* 18 (1991) 33-60. A slightly revised and updated version of the article was recently published in L.L. GRABBE (ed.), *Good Kings and Bad Kings* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 393; London – New York 2005) 210-233.

The Book of Kings describes in great detail Josiah's reform and his expansion to Bethel (2 Kgs 23,15-18). Religious reform of the kind attributed to Josiah is a natural place to seek a new identity embracing all YHWH devotees under a single umbrella. Bethel was a former major administrative and cultic centre of both Israel and its successor, the province of Samerina. The inclusion of the city and its region in the district system of the Kingdom of Judah, as indicated in Josh 18,21-24, requires an explanation. I have already mentioned the suggestions by Davies and Knauf that the Bethel district was transferred to the Kingdom of Judah either at the time of Ahaz (Davies) or during the reign of Manasseh (Knauf). However, these suggestions not only lack concrete evidence, but are improbable, as it is highly unlikely that an Assyrian king would have detached this important administrative and cultic centre from the province of Samerina and handed it over to a neighbouring vassal kingdom as a reward for loyalty. The most likely explanation for the inclusion of the district of Bethel in Judah's district list is that the city was conquered and annexed by Josiah following Assyria's withdrawal from the region. Indeed, the author of the Book of Kings links the conquest of Bethel with the reforms he carried in his kingdom (2 Kgs 23,15)⁴³.

In analysing the prophetic narrative of 1 Kgs 13, John Van Seters dismisses this conclusion and suggests that the description in 2 Kgs 23,15-20 was invented and inserted into the text to fulfil the prediction of 1 Kgs 13. He thus concludes that "there was no northern campaign against Bethel or any other of the northern cult centres by Josiah. Any reform activity and cult centralization was entirely restricted to Judah 'from Geba to Beersheba'"⁴⁴. However, this conclusion clearly ignores the evidence of Josh 18,21-24,

⁴³ As suggested by some scholars, verses 16-20 are a later expansion, written by an author who edited the description of the destruction of the altar at Bethel. See H. SPIECKERMANN, *Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit* (FRLANT 129; Göttingen 1982) 116-119, 427-428; M. O'BRIEN, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis. A Reassessment* (OBO 92; Freiburg – Göttingen 1989) 187, 263-264; M. GLEIS, *Die Bamah* (BZAW 251; Berlin – New York 1997) 126, n. 77, with earlier literature; NA'AMAN, "Cult Reforms", 135.

⁴⁴ J. VAN SETERS, "The Deuteronomistic History: Can It Avoid Death by Redaction", *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History* (ed. T. RÖMER) (BETL 147; Leuven 2000) 213-222 (citation from p. 221).

according to which Bethel was included in the district list of Judah⁴⁵. It also ignores the inclusion of Bethel in the exilic and post-exilic province of Yehud and the inclusion of its inhabitants in the List of Returnees from Babylonia. Van Seters also overlooks the obvious possibility that the old account of the conquest of Bethel by Josiah may have served as the historical core around which the late story in 1 Kings 13 was formed. I can see no alternative to the conclusion that Bethel and its district were indeed conquered by Josiah and annexed to his kingdom, and that the king's operations in the district of Samerina were the reason for his execution by the Egyptians at Megiddo (2 Kgs 23,29).

Following the Assyrian withdrawal from Palestine and the new political opportunities opened up before the Kingdom of Judah, Josiah expanded northward and conquered several Israelite territories, conducted cult reform in his kingdom, and eliminated what was considered an "Assyrian" cult — namely, one that contemporaries associated with the Assyrian empire⁴⁶. The creation of a new ethnic-religious-cultural identity for the inhabitants of Judah fits in well the objects of the reform. Thus, the appropriation of the patrimony of the former Kingdom of Israel as part of the formation of a new identity might be regarded as an integral part of the reform. To gain control of the Israelite heritage, Josiah may have plundered scrolls deposited in the temple of Bethel, just as Tukulti-Ninurta I and Ashurbanipal seized the scholarly tablets of Babylon. This may explain how the scrolls of Amos and Hosea, as well as historiographical works such as the story cycle of Jacob, the pre-Deuteronomistic "Book of Saviours", and a number of prophetic stories may have reached the court of Jerusalem. These works, which originally used the name "Israel" to refer only to the Northern Kingdom, were later reworked and incorporated into the histories composed by Judahite scribes, in which "Israel" appears in its new ethnic-religious connotation.

The Exodus is one Israelite tradition that seems to have been of central importance only in the Northern Kingdom. This is indicated by the fact that it features in the prophecies of Hosea and Amos, but

⁴⁵ A. ALT, "Judas Gaue unter Josia", *PJb* 21 (1925) 100-116; NA'AMAN, "Kingdom of Judah", 5-33.

⁴⁶ NA'AMAN, "Cult Reforms", 131-142, with earlier literature.

is notably absent in the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah⁴⁷. Some texts (in particular Exod 15,1-17; 1 Kgs 12,28; Ps 78) hint that the Exodus tradition was known also in Judah in the pre-Exilic period⁴⁸; but whether the Passover feast was celebrated there before the time of Josiah remains unknown. According to 2 Kgs 23,21-23, Josiah celebrated the feast of Passover, “as it is written in this book of the covenant”, but its celebration is presented as a great innovation (“For no such Passover there had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah”). In all probability, Josiah’s celebration of the Passover feast in the temple was part of his efforts to integrate northern Israelite traditions into his kingdom, just as Tukulti-Ninurta’s and Sennacherib’s celebration of the Akitu festival in Ashur was a way of integrating the Babylonian festival into Assyria.

Historiographical compositions featuring the name “Israel” as the ethnic-religious designation of all YHWH devotees should be considered as part of this effort to gain control over the heritage of the Northern Kingdom. Unfortunately, the date of these compositions is still a subject of debate among scholars. The dating is particularly significant for the story of the Exodus, which some scholars date to the pre-exilic period and others to the exilic period⁴⁹. If the former option (which I support) is accepted, it may be understood as part of the effort to promote Josiah’s reforms by

⁴⁷ S. DECK, “Kein Exodus bei Jesaja?”, *Ich bewirke das Heil und erschaffe das Unheil (Jesaja 45,7)*. Studien zur Botschaft der Propheten. Festschrift für Lothar Ruppert zum 65. Geburtstag (eds. F. DIETRICH – B. WILLMES) (FzB 88; Würzburg 1988) 31-47, suggested that Isaiah alluded to the Exodus in some of his prophecies. However, the evidence she brought is ambiguous and her claim is not convincing.

⁴⁸ Y. HOFFMAN, “A North Israelite Typological Myth and a Judean Historical Tradition: The Exodus in Hosea and Amos”, *VT* 39 (1989) 169-182; G. DAVIES, “Was There an Exodus?”, *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel*. Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar (ed. J. DAY) (London – New York 2004) 26-27.

⁴⁹ The date of the composition of the Exodus story is an element of the much broader debate over the composition of the Pentateuch, the Hexateuch and the Enneateuch. The suggestions that the life of Moses and the Exodus story are the original introduction of the Deuteronomistic history and that it was written in the pre-exilic period make good sense. But this issue is too broad and complicated to be discussed here.

introducing the Exodus narrative to the elite of his kingdom. Another important issue is the date of the description of the United Monarchy, which was invoked to glorify the common past of the inhabitants of Israel and Judah.

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In a recently published article I suggested that the name “Israel” appears for the first time in the pre-Deuteronomistic story cycles of Saul, David and Solomon. Since the territory ascribed to the three kings in these early works was much larger than that of the Kingdom of Judah, that designation did not fit the outlines of the narratives, whereas the name “Israel” was a more appropriate label for the territory in which they operated and was therefore preferred by the authors⁵⁰. Later, the story cycles of the early Israelite kings formed the nucleus of the comprehensive historical work penned by the Deuteronomist. It was he who introduced the ethnic-religious connotation of the name “Israel”, thereby creating a glorious unified past for the devotees of YHWH in the realms of Israel and Judah. If this theory is correct, the adoption of the designation “Israel” took place in stages: initially as an ideological convenience, but ultimately as a name with a strong ethnic-religious connotation.

Following the downfall of the Kingdom of Judah and its annexation by the Babylonians, its northern districts were incorporated into a new province whose centre was at Mizpah. This is significant, as the elites of the two provinces of Samerina and Yehud must have competed over the heritage of Israel. The elite of Samerina no doubt claimed that, as the descendants of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Israel, they were the genuine Israelites and should therefore be in charge of its heritage — while the leaders of Yehud laid the same claim, citing the heritage of the late Judahite monarchy. Retaining Bethel — the ancestral major cult centre of Israel — as the cult centre of the new province would have strengthened the Judean claim⁵¹. The ideological dispute over the

⁵⁰ NA'AMAN, “Saul”, 342-348.

⁵¹ T. VEIJOLA, *Verheissung in der Krise*. Studien zur Literatur und

heritage of Israel continued well into the post-exilic period, and is probably one of the central bones of contention in the Judean-Samaritan conflict throughout the Second Temple period.

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SUMMARY

The article addresses the controversial issue of the formation of “biblical Israel” in biblical historiography. It begins by presenting the political-cultural struggle between Assyria and Babylonia in the second and first millennia BCE, in part over the question of ownership of the cultural patrimony of ancient Mesopotamia. It goes on to examine relations between Judah and Israel and compares them to those between Assyria and Babylonia. It then suggests that the adoption of the Israelite identity by Judah, which took place during the reign of Josiah as part in his cultic reform, was motivated by the desire to take possession of the highly prestigious heritage of Israel, which had remained vacant since that kingdom’s annexation by Assyria in 720 BCE.

Theologie der Exilzeit anhand des 89. Psalms (Helsinki 1982) 176-210; J. BLENKINSOPP, “The Judaean Priesthood during the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods: A Hypothetical Reconstruction”, *CBQ* 60 (1998) 25-43; idem, “Bethel in the Neo-Babylonian Period”, *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (eds. O. LIPSCHITS – J. BLENKINSOPP) (Winona Lake, IN 2003) 93-107; A. ROFÉ, “The History of Israelite Religion and the Biblical Text. Corrections Due to the Unification of Worship”, *Emanuel. Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (eds. S.M. PAUL – R.A. KRAFT – L.H. SCHIFFMAN) (SVT 94; Boston, MA 2003) 781-793; J.F. GOMES, *The Sanctuary of Bethel and the Configuration of Israelite Identity* (BZAW 368; Berlin – New York 2006) 185-223; KNAUF, “Bethel”, 291-349; NA'AMAN, “Saul”, 338-342, with earlier literature.

Pleasing God or Pleasing People? Defending the Gospel in Galatians 1-2

Paul's letters, "in which [were] some things hard to understand" (2 Pet 3,16) for the ancients, have proven little better for present-day readers. In Gal 1,11-12 Paul would have his converts know that his gospel is from God. Despite his stated purpose and despite the consensus that this purpose governs 1,13-2,21, scholars have found the passage difficult to follow. Three common views of the text — that Paul defends both his gospel and apostolate, that he defends himself against accusations, and that he presents himself as a paradigm for the Galatians — drift from Paul's stated course. This paper will critique these three views and then present an alternative from the text: Paul's change in life direction from seeking to please people to seeking to please God in 1,10 substantiates his claim in 1,11-12 of the divine origin of his gospel.

In Gal 1,6-12 Paul sketches the nature of the problem in the Galatian church and how he intends to counter it. He begins by defining the problem: the Galatians are turning to another gospel (1,6-7). His "let him be anathema" in vv. 8-9 reinforces the gravity of abandoning his gospel. Then after affirming his desire to please God rather than people in 1,10, Paul concludes in 1,11-12 that the gospel he preached to them is not a message of human invention because he received it not from human beings but from God himself¹. This conclusion is what he wishes for the Galatians to

¹ There is some controversy about whether ἢ between "human being" and "God" in 1,10 is disjunctive or conjunctive, i.e. does Paul say he does not seek to please people but that he does seek to please God (disjunctive ἢ), or does he say that he does not seek to please either people or God (conjunctive ἢ)? The contrast between God and people throughout chaps. 1 and 2 would speak for disjunctive ἢ. Even the rest of v. 10, by contrasting pleasing people with being a servant of Christ, is evidence for the disjunctive view. See J.H. SCHÜTZ, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Louisville, KY 2007) 128-129, for ἢ as conjunctive and B.C. LATEGAN, "Is Paul Defending his Apostleship in Galatians: The Function of Galatians 1:11-12 and 2:19-20 in the Development of Paul's Argument", *NTS* 34 (1988) 422-423, for ἢ as disjunctive.

know (γνωρίζω in v. 11), and it is commonly and correctly recognized as his thesis in 1,13-2,21. What has not been recognized is the role 1,10 plays in the proof of that thesis.

I. View 1: Defense of Paul's Apostolate

The most widespread understanding of Gal 1,13-2,21 is that Paul is defending both his gospel and apostolate, with the authenticity of Paul's apostolate generally thought to confirm the truth of his message². James Dunn, for example, understands Paul to begin this defense in v. 1. Dunn says, "It was precisely this claim [that Christ is the content of the gospel] regarding his 'gospel to the Gentiles' which he thought necessary to defend against the imputations that apostolic authority had to be transmitted or validated through human channels (i.1, 11-12)"³. Although Paul states that his apostolate is God-given and not of human origin in v. 1, the verse by itself does little to indicate a point Paul will subsequently defend because he often introduces his letters with the divine origin of his apostleship. As it stands 1,1 simply begins the God/human contrast he continues throughout chaps. 1-2. Three verses later, however, Paul says that Christ gave himself for our sins to deliver us according to the will of God. Will Paul then connect his apostolate in v. 1 to his gospel in v. 4 and defend both as God-given? In 1,8 Paul explicitly breaks any such link when he says the Galatians should turn even from him or an angel from heaven who preaches another gospel. Whether or not Paul anticipates apostatizing, he has certainly disadvantaged his case if he plans to argue that the Galatians should accept his teaching on the grounds of apostolic rank.

Scholars also look for evidence of Paul's defense of his apostleship in 2,1-10. Alan Brehm, for example, sees the outcome of the Jerusalem Council as the recognition of both Paul's gospel and

² E.g., F.F. BRUCE, *The Epistle to the Galatians*. A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI 1982) 19; J.D.G. DUNN, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; Peabody, MA 1993) 67; R.N. LONGENECKER, *Galatians* (Dallas, TX 1990) 24; T. WIARDA, "The Jerusalem Council and the Theological Task", *JETS* 46 (2003) 238.

³ DUNN, *Galatians*, 67.

apostleship⁴. However, in 2,6 Paul says that it makes no difference to him who Peter, James, and John were because God accepts no one's person. It would stand to reason that if Paul sought their endorsement or if he even made the point that he received it, it might matter to him who they were⁵. Furthermore, Paul was not one to miss the obvious implication of his own words: what difference did it make that Paul received commendation from Jerusalem? God accepts no one's person.

Finally, although one might consider Paul's reproof of Peter in 2,11-14 to establish Paul's authority as an apostle⁶, Acts 11,2-3 records Jewish Christians chiding Peter without claiming apostolic rank, and Peter himself rebuked Jesus without messianic aspirations (Matt 16,21-23). So the fact of the rebuke contributes little to a case for equality in Paul's time. In fact, if Paul accuses the premier apostle of walking away from the truth of the gospel, he cannot convincingly argue that the Galatians should accept his gospel on the basis that he is an apostle. Some of Paul's statements do support his apostolate — for example, that God called him to preach in 1,15-16 — but confirming his position is not his purpose. Instead, Paul explicitly severs the rank of any individual from the truth of the gospel.

⁴ H.A. BREHM, "Paul's Relationship with the Jerusalem Apostles in Galatians 1 and 2", *SJT* 37 (1994) 11. See also B.H. MCLEAN, "Galatians 2:7-9 and the Recognition of Paul's Apostolic Status at the Jerusalem Conference: A Critique of G. Luedemann's Solution", *NTS* 37 (1991) 68; T. WIARDA, "Plot and Character in Galatians 1-2", *TynB* 55 (2004) 243. F.E. UDOH, "Paul's Views on the Law: Questions about Origin (Gal 1:6-2:21; Phil 3:2-11)", *NT* 42 (2000) 229, adds that the reason Paul went to the Council was to receive an endorsement of his apostolic authority and practice from Jerusalem. H.D. BETZ, *Galatians. A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA 1979) 104, sees recognition of Paul's gospel and mission in the passage.

⁵ J.D.G. DUNN, "The Relationship between Paul and Jerusalem according to Galatians 1 and 2", *NTS* 28 (1982) 461, 473, would have it both ways, i.e. that Paul wanted both his independence and an acknowledgement by Jerusalem. He sees a change in Paul's attitude from one of acknowledging Jerusalem's authority in 2,1-10 to one of backing away from it in 2,11-14. To change one's mind is certainly within the realm of plausibility, but for Paul to appeal both to the apostles' authority and their lack of it in the same argument and with respect to the same issue is not. The Galatians would not be persuaded.

⁶ E.g., G. LUEDEMANN, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles. Studies in Chronology* (Philadelphia, PA 1984) 75-77.

II. View 2: Paul's Defense against Accusations

The viewpoint that Paul defends himself against accusations is not a single, unified view but a set of viewpoints encompassing charges of many kinds. The previous view overlaps with it in that many who hold that Paul defends his apostolate hold that he defends it against accusations. But others who read accusations behind the text find them to target more (or other) than Paul's apostolic credentials. The accusations take many forms. David Dockery sees Paul answering the accusation that his apostleship is derived and dependent whereas Franz Mußner sees the accusation that Paul's is not a true apostolate at all⁷. James Dunn says that in 1,17 Paul responds to a report that he received the gospel from the Jerusalem apostles, and J.L. Martyn adds that stories circulated that Paul "received supplemental instruction from 'the disciples in Damascus'"⁸. Dieter Lührmann reads even in Paul's oath (1,20) false rumors about his visit with Peter⁹. Scholars distill such charges from the text by mirror reading, that is, by reading a statement Paul makes as the denial of a charge made against him. Or, as George Lyons puts it, "The designation 'mirror reading' arises from the presumption that what Paul denies, his opponents have asserted and/or that what he asserts, they have denied"¹⁰.

The problem with mirror reading in general is that a given response may be provoked by more than one cause. For example, Paul's statement in 1,10 that he does not still please people might be a response to a charge that he does; or it might be a veiled charge that his opponents do, an indirect warning to his readers against doing so, or evidence that his gospel is true because only pleasing people would motivate him to lie. The reflection in the mirror changes as the mirror is turned. Therefore mirror reading, by

⁷ D.S. DOCKERY, "Introduction to the Epistle and Paul's Defense of his Apostleship (Galatians 1:1-2:14)", *RevExp* 91 (1994) 149. See also DUNN, *Galatians*, 67. F. MUßNER, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT 9; Freiburg ⁵1988) 62.

⁸ DUNN, *Galatians*, 68; J.L. MARTYN, *Galatians*. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 33A; New York, NY 1997) 159.

⁹ D. LÜHRMANN, *Galatians*. A Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN 1992) 33. See also MARTYN, *Galatians*, 174; M. SILVA, *Interpreting Galatians*. Explorations in Exegetical Method (Grand Rapids, MI ²2001) 105.

¹⁰ G. LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography*. Toward a New Understanding (SBLDS 73; Atlanta, GA 1985) 80-81.

assuming Paul responds to a direct attack, begs the question. This does not prove that Paul is not responding to accusations but simply that the burden of proof for any particular allegation lies upon the one who suggests it.

Lyons offers much solid criticism of mirror reading, including criticism of specific points¹¹. For example, scholars who mirror read commonly conclude from 1,1.11.12 that in chaps. 1–2 Paul seeks to prove his independence as an apostle because he had been accused of dependence upon Jerusalem. However, Lyons notes that 2,1-10 makes this highly unlikely. Why would Paul include either his concern in 2,2 that Jerusalem could destroy his work among the Gentiles or his concession to the apostles in 2,10 if his point were to prove his independence? Both particulars would be better left unstated¹².

Concerning other accusations, if Lührmann is correct that false rumors circulated about Paul's visit to Peter, Paul's silence about their interaction does little to dispel them. His defense against stories that disciples in Damascus instructed him is even weaker — he admits to a three-year stay in Arabia and Damascus but omits any mention of the disciples. This would do more to confirm than to refute any stories in the minds of his readers. In addition, although Paul does write to deny that he received his gospel from any human source, it does not follow that he was accused of receiving it from the Jerusalem apostles. In fact, he says that it is because the Galatians were turning to another teaching that he would show his gospel to be from God (1,6.11-12), and thus he renders such a charge superfluous. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous section, it is not Paul's purpose to defend his apostolate; and therefore he is not countering attacks on it. This analysis thus discredits two of the major contentions of mirror reading — that Paul answers accusations that he is dependent upon Jerusalem and that his apostolic credentials are lacking — and some minor ones as well.

¹¹ See LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography* for a thorough critique of mirror reading, and pp. 79-121 in particular for a detailed response to mirror reading in Galatians. J.M.G. BARCLAY, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case", *The Galatians Debate*. Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation (ed. M.D. NANOS) (Peabody, MA 2002) 367-382, also argues against the idea that Paul answers charges later in Galatians.

¹² LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography*, 83-86.

It is unlikely that mirror reading as a general principle will ultimately be overthrown since any writer may respond to a charge without stating it. In the absence of irrefutable proof against mirror reading in general, it should be noted first that two important proposals of mirror reading in Galatians have been disproven; second, that because of the number of possible causes for a particular statement Paul makes, an accusation cannot simply be assumed; and third, that Paul's lack of reticence makes a string of unstated charges extremely unlikely.

III. View 3: Paul as Paradigm

Proponents of the paradigm view read Gal 1,13–2,21 as Paul's appeal to the Galatians to imitate him. Lyons describes this view when he says that in 1,13 "Paul is establishing his divinely determined ethos, not defending his person or official credentials" and that in the verses following, Paul "is a paradigm of the gospel he proclaims" and "serves as the paradigm of the behavior he persuades his readers to imitate"¹³.

Lyons maintains that Paul's call in 4,12 to be as he is "would be scarcely intelligible" apart from the autobiographical narrative in chaps. 1–2. Conversely, Beverly Gaventa notes that Paul's self-disclosure in this letter is without parallel in his other writings and should signal his paradigmatic purpose¹⁴. This view is gaining popularity. James Hester looks to rhetorical criticism to argue that Galatians 1–2 is epideictic and therefore educational. Epideictic proofs consist primarily of examples that amplify the author's point,

¹³ LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography*, 133, 134, and 136, resp. This view is gaining followers, e.g. C.B. COUSAR, *Reading Galatians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians*. A Literary and Theological Commentary (ed. C.H. TALBERT) (Reading the New Testament Series; Macon, GA 2001) 12; P.M. SPRINKLE, *Law and Life*. The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul (ed. J. FREY) (WUNT 241; Tübingen 2008) 154. Cp. A. ASANO, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*. Exegetical, Social-Anthropological and Socio-Historical Studies (JSNTSS 285; London; New York 2005) 114–116.

¹⁴ LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography*, 165. B.R. GAVENTA, "Galatians 1 and 2: Autobiography as Paradigm", *NT* 28 (1986) 312–313. However, if 4,12–20 is "scarcely intelligible" without 1,13–2,21, what becomes of Paul's appeals to follow him in 1 Cor 11,1; Phil 3,17; and 1 Thess 1,6 where he uses relatively little self-disclosure?

and Paul offers himself as the example¹⁵. Hester asserts in particular that before 2,14 Paul “was narrating the demonstration of the power of the gospel to change character” and that after 2,14 he uses “the inclusive ‘I’, as the one whose character should be imitated”¹⁶. Gaventa works through the text in more detail to explain how Paul acts as paradigm. She says 1,10 implies that the Galatians desire to please people and that Paul is an example of not doing so¹⁷. Galatians 1,11-17 then illustrates Paul’s response to the demand of the gospel to preach to the Gentiles, and 1,18-24 establishes his personal credibility by confirming his move from persecutor to gospel preacher¹⁸. In 2,1-10 she sees Jerusalem recognizing “God’s action in Paul’s work among the Gentiles” followed by a change of heart in 2,11-14 in which they no longer confirm his endeavors¹⁹. Gaventa explains further that Paul’s gospel and his calling as an apostle (his response to which demonstrates his personal credibility) are “inextricably linked”²⁰ and that “the gospel and its attendant

¹⁵ J.D. HESTER, “Placing the Blame: The Presence of Epideictic in Galatians 1 and 2”, *Persuasive Artistry*. Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy (eds. D.F. WATSON – G.A. KENNEDY) (JSNTSS 50; Sheffield 1991) 292-293, 298. See also J.-N. ALETTI, “Galates 1-2: Quelle Fonction et Quelle Demonstration?”, *Bib* 86 (2005) 305-311, against Hester and some elements of rhetorical analysis. See M. HEATH, “John Chrysostom, Rhetoric and Galatians”, *Biblical Interpretation* 12 (2004) 369-400; M.P. SURBURG, “Ancient Rhetorical Criticism, Galatians, and Paul at Twenty-five Years”, *Concordia Journal* 30 (2004) 13-39, against rhetorical approaches to Paul’s letters in general.

¹⁶ HESTER, “Placing the Blame”, 305-306.

¹⁷ GAVENTA, “Autobiography as Paradigm”, 314. Similarly, R.G. HALL, “Historical Inference and Rhetorical Effect: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2”, *Persuasive Artistry*, 318.

¹⁸ GAVENTA, “Autobiography as Paradigm”, 315-316. See also F.J. MATERA, *Galatians* (ed. D.J. HARRINGTON) (SP 9; Collegeville, MN 1992) 61, 64.

¹⁹ GAVENTA, “Autobiography as Paradigm”, 316-317. DOCKERY, “Paul’s Defense”, 162, adds that Peter and the Galatians should have withstood the false teachers just as Paul had in 2,1-5.

²⁰ GAVENTA, “Autobiography as Paradigm”, 317. As with the view that Paul defends his apostolate, the identification of Paul with his gospel is common to many who hold the paradigm view, e.g., B.W. LONGENECKER, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God*. The Transformation of Identity in Galatians (Nashville, TN 1998) 148; LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography*, 143; SCHÜTZ, *Apostolic Authority*, 134. C.E.J. HODGE, “Apostle to the Gentiles: Constructions of Paul’s Identity”, *Biblical Interpretation* 13 (2005) 288, notes that people shift and prioritize multiple identities, and she therefore interprets

vocation simply take over Paul's earlier life"²¹. In other words, Paul's character validates his gospel, and thus the paradigm view fulfills 1,11-12. Now if Paul claims to be a paradigm of the gospel and if he combats the gospel of his opponents by urging the Galatians to follow his example, he is necessarily claiming character superior to that of his opponents and crediting his superior character to his gospel. The Galatians should conclude, then, that Paul's message is true (or at least better than that of his adversaries).

Although Paul embodies upright behavior in Galatians 1-2 — and ought to be used as a paradigm where possible — it is not the purpose of these two chapters to show this²². Donald Verseput finds that the details of the narrative do not support a paradigm view: "Paul makes no effort to avoid emphasizing his special apostolic role which removes him from his readership (1,12.15-16; 2,4-5.7-8), nor is it at all clear ... why Paul should make his geographical distance from Palestine such a dominant factor in his argument"²³. Johan Vos also observes that "only a few elements in Gal 1:13-2:14 really have paradigmatic force" while details of Paul's journeys and his relation to the pillar apostles are irrelevant as examples for the Galatians²⁴. Even Lyons, although he holds the paradigm view, cannot fit some important pieces, such as Paul's visit to Peter in 1,18-20 and his oath in 1,20, into a paradigm pattern²⁵.

Chapter 2 presents additional obstacles for the paradigm view. If Paul's point in 2,1-10 is that the apostles recognized "God's action in Paul's work among the Gentiles"²⁶, why would he add v. 6 that it

Paul as willing "to forego certain practices of the law (an important part of his Judean identity) in order to interact with the gentiles (and he rebukes his colleagues for refusing to do so [Gal 2:11-14])". Paul's rebuke goes beyond Judean identity, however, when he says that he has died to the law (Gal 2,17-20).

²¹ B.R. GAVENTA, "Is Galatians Just a 'Guy Thing'? A Theological Reflection", *Int* 54 (2000) 271.

²² However, Paul does distinctly set himself up as a paradigm of one living by the gospel in 2,18-21.

²³ D. VERSEPUT, "Paul's Gentile Mission and the Jewish Christian Community: A Study of the Narrative in Galatians 1 and 2", *NTS* 39 (1993) 37, n. 3.

²⁴ J.S. VOS, "Paul's Argumentation in Galatians 1-2", *HTR* 87 (1994) 14-15.

²⁵ LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography*, 158, 160.

²⁶ GAVENTA, "Autobiography as Paradigm", 315-316.

did not matter who these apostles were — in God's sight or Paul's? As in the first view, if it mattered that the apostles affirm Paul's work, it mattered who they were. Verse 6 would undercut the very case Paul made.

One aspect of Paul's character that does distinguish him from his opponents is that he no longer strives to please people but God (1,10; 6,12). According to the paradigm view, the power of the gospel wrought this change in Paul, and he encourages the Galatians to follow his example²⁷. Does this mean, then, that the gospel affected the other apostles in the same way²⁸? If so, it seems odd that in chap. 1 Paul avoids encountering them, men who were also changed by the power of the gospel. If not, it says little for Paul's point if the leaders of the movement were themselves unaffected by the power Paul argues it had.

Paul's narrative in 2,11-14 tells against the paradigm view as well. In Antioch, Peter still agreed with Paul about the gospel (2,16)²⁹. Paul, however, accused him of walking away from the truth of the gospel by refusing to eat any longer with the Gentiles (2,14). In other words, Peter's departure from the gospel was behavioral, not doctrinal or intellectual — he still knew it was Christ who justifies, and who justifies without the law. But if Paul is attempting

²⁷ E.g., GAVENTA, "Autobiography as Paradigm", 314.

²⁸ Some scholars question whether Paul and the Jerusalem apostles taught the same gospel. Although GAVENTA, "Autobiography as Paradigm", 319, reads 1,6-9 as a statement that there is only one gospel, LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography*, 128, reads it as a denial only of another gospel for the Galatians. And although SCHÜTZ, *Apostolic Authority*, 149, sees Paul opposing circumcision as part of the one gospel. J. LAMBRECHT, "Unity and Diversity in Gal 1-2", *Unite et Diversite dans l'Église* (ed. H. CAZELLES) (Teologia e Filosofia 15; Vatican City 1989) 131, finds two gospels in 2,7-10 where Paul's has dropped some of the legal requirements of Jerusalem's. But both Jew and Gentile were justified by faith apart from works of the law (2,15-16); and Peter, if he were justified by a gospel that included keeping the law, would have been faulted in 2,11-14 for joining the Gentile table not for leaving it. The law was temporary (3,19) and not a part of the gospel (3,25). SCHÜTZ, *Apostolic Authority*, 155, also correctly points out that the unity of the church depends upon the singularity of the gospel. Even Paul's dealings with Peter in Antioch demonstrate this.

²⁹ *Contra* G. HOWARD, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia. A Study in Early Christian Theology* (SNTSMS 35; Cambridge – New York 1990) 24. Most exegetes, however, understand Peter and Paul to be at odds over practice, not doctrine.

to show the power of the gospel to change character, he undermines his case when he includes the examples of Peter, Barnabas, and the Jewish Christians with them, whose belief in the gospel failed to produce appropriate behavioral changes in them. To strengthen that case, Paul should have omitted this section.

In fact, the claim that Paul is proving the power of the gospel to change character, a fundamental claim of the paradigm view, is also a major weakness of the view. For example, that Paul responded to the gospel by preaching it, that he gave up persecuting the church, and that he persevered in the gospel despite opposition are all adduced as evidence of Paul as one transformed by the gospel³⁰. However, in 1,15-24 Paul portrays more of his fifteen days in Jerusalem than of his three years in Arabia and Damascus and more of his reputation in Judea than of his time in Syria and Cilicia. Therefore, his obedience in preaching the gospel is not his emphasis. Furthermore, Paul's opponents clearly responded to their gospel by preaching it since they preached it to the Galatians. They did not drag Christians into court since they were associating with them in the churches. And they persevered in their gospel since they taught it in Jerusalem as well as in Galatia. Therefore, these particular practices do little to distinguish Paul's character from theirs.

Paul, then, does not use the gospel's power to change character to authenticate his message, but he must verify it in some manner to fulfill his stated purpose in 1,11-12. Until this gap is filled, the paradigm view — with or without Paul's change in character — begs the question because Paul must show which gospel is true before his exemplary response to it will, or even should, be a pattern for the Galatians. Paul does indeed demonstrate throughout 1,13-2,21 that he has turned from pleasing people to pleasing God, and he will use this to verify his gospel. But not by proving its power to change character.

Many details of Paul's narrative ill fit a paradigm pattern — some even oppose it — and Paul does not contend in chaps. 1-2 that the

³⁰ For the first point, see GAVENTA, "Autobiography as Paradigm", 315; MATERA, *Galatians*, 61, 64. For the second, see GAVENTA, "Autobiography as Paradigm", 316. For the third, see LONGENECKER, *Abraham's God*, 148-149. Albrecht Oepke and Michael Winger also hold in general that Paul's reversal was not caused by human means — A. OEPKE, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (ed. J. ROHDE) (THKNT 9; Berlin 1984) 55; M. WINGER, "Tradition, Revelation and Gospel: A Study in Galatians", *JSNT* 53 (1994) 80.

gospel produces change in character. He, in fact, breaks any intrinsic connection between himself and the gospel in 1,8 when he speaks against anyone — himself included — who preaches another gospel.

IV. Paul's Defense of the Gospel

Each view just critiqued has merit: Paul was an apostle, he was at times falsely accused, and his readers should follow his example where possible. However, none succeeds in fulfilling Paul's stated purpose in 1,6-12 of verifying his gospel. To follow the argument in 1,13-2,21, we return to 1,6-12.

1. *The Travelogue: Galatians 1,13-24 in Light of 1,6-12*

In 1,6-9 Paul urges the Galatians to return to the gospel he taught them. He then claims in vv. 11-12 that he did not receive this gospel from human beings but through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Both Paul's introduction to the divine origin of his gospel in v. 11, γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν "for I make known to you", and his rebuke of the Galatians in vv. 6-7 necessitate that he prove this claim.

a) Paul's Argument

Paul begins his proof in v. 13, but how vv. 13-24 verify Paul's gospel is not immediately obvious. He is not demonstrating, for example, a lack of opportunity to receive the gospel from human beings. Fifteen days with Peter, his years with Barnabas, and even his passing acquaintance with James would allow him multiple opportunities. The passage does indicate Paul's independence from Jerusalem, although as Lyons noted (above), chap. 2 works against independence as Paul's point. However, the distance Paul kept from the apostles also illustrates that he did not seek to mingle with them with an eye to prominence among them, and this answers his question in v. 10: "Do I now seek to please people or God?" It is my contention that Paul argues for the divine origin of his gospel on the basis that he has sought to please God, not human beings, after his conversion. Exegetes generally understand that Paul makes this claim in v. 10, but they have not recognized its critical role in his defense of the gospel from 1,10-2,21.

To see this, we first need to understand v. 10 and its relationship to vv. 11-12. Paul begins v. 10 with two questions: "For do I now

strive to please (πειθω) people or God³¹? Or do I seek to please (ὑρέσκειν) people?” In his initial question he makes two assumptions that are pertinent to his argument. One is that in this context seeking to please God and seeking to please people are mutually exclusive³². The other is that he will try to please one or the other. Therefore if Paul seeks to please one, he does not seek to please the other; and if he does not seek to please the one, he does seek to please the other. Whether or not Paul applies these categories to other people is moot: here he speaks of himself.

Paul spoke of preaching the gospel in vv. 8-9. He uses the two questions in v. 10ab to pinpoint the category into which he falls if he preaches a false gospel: that of pleasing people. His denial of pleasing people inherent in these questions does not look back to “anathema” (ἀνάθεμα) in vv. 8-9 as if those verses illustrate his refusal to accommodate the false teachers³³. Instead, he connects a desire to curry human favor with a lack of service to Christ in v. 10c — “If I still pleased people, I would not be a servant of Christ” — and in vv. 11-12 describes the single aspect of serving Christ he develops in the context: preaching the gospel God gave him. Verse 10c thus bridges v. 10ab and vv. 11-12 using the natural cause and effect relationship between whom one seeks to please (v. 10) and what one does (vv. 11-12). If Paul, having been commissioned by God to preach, sought to please God, he would teach the gospel of Christ. If he sought to please people, he would alter his gospel to suit them (cf. 6,12)³⁴. Paul makes this relationship explicit in part at

³¹ W. BAUER, “πειθω”, BDAG, 791-792, lists “convince”, “persuade”, “appeal to”, “win over”, “strive to please”, “conciliate”, “pacify”, “set at ease/rest” as possible meanings of the active indicative of πειθω. “Strive to please” fits the context, but “to persuade (etc.) God” would be difficult to interpret.

³² This need not be true in general — Jesus himself increased “in divine and human favor” as a child (Luke 2,52 NRSV). See also OEPKE, *An die Galater*, 54. In Galatians seeking to please people is done for advancement among them (e.g., 1,13-14). And the fault may be similar to that in John 5,39-44. On the other hand, to please others rather than oneself as Paul commands in Rom 15,1-3 means to help them for their edification.

³³ *Contra* LYONS, *Pauline Autobiography*, 145-146; MUßNER, *Galaterbrief*, 63.

³⁴ In 1 Cor 1,17-25 Paul says that the crucified Christ is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (v. 23). Thus the gospel message was unpopular with both.

the end of v. 10 and thereby sets up the test he will use to show that his gospel is true³⁵.

Verses 13-16 then flesh out the contrast between the two categories in v. 10 by depicting them as a contrast in Paul's past and present life. He now (ἄρτι, v. 10a) tries to please God; he does not still (ἔτι, v. 10c) cater to people. Ἠκούσατε γάρ "for you have heard" at the beginning of v. 13 anticipates that Paul will confirm what he has just said with information familiar to his readers, and the verse continues on to describe his past in Judaism. Now Paul's past in Judaism will not of itself support his assertion in vv. 11-12 that his gospel is from God, but it does pick up his allusion to his past in v. 10. There ἔτι informs the reader that he speaks of the past, as ποτέ does in v. 13. Paul indicates in v. 10 that he sought to please people in the past. If he still did so, he would not be a servant of Christ, but he wishes for them to know that he preached the gospel he received from God (vv. 11-12). Verses 13-16 correspond to vv. 10-12 in that Paul first describes his past in vv. 13-14 (cp. v. 10) and then his commission to preach in vv. 15-16 (cp. vv. 11-12). Thus Paul links his former practice of pleasing people in v. 10 with his advancement in Judaism in vv. 13-14 to show that for him pleasing people has the goal of self-promotion³⁶. He then explains the change

³⁵ By picking up both the verb and the direct object from v. 10b in v. 10c, Paul plainly connects the end to the beginning of the verse. However, v. 10c — "If I still pleased people, I would not be a servant of Christ" — actually states the converse of what Paul needs to use to argue his case. He must show that he does not please people (i.e. he pleases God) because if he pleases God, it follows that he is a servant of Christ in preaching the gospel since this is what God called him to do. However, the two conditionals are equivalent — Paul pleases God if and only if he teaches the gospel God gave him — and, therefore, if he proves one side of the equivalence, he proves the other. But why does Paul state the converse of the conditional he will actually use? He implicitly denies seeking to please people in v. 10ab, so he states in v. 10c what logically follows if he does. Exegetes have puzzled over Paul's arguments in chaps. 1-2 because Paul does not overtly state what he will use to support his gospel. But in v. 10c, he does indicate the direction of his proof.

³⁶ Striving for recognition among Jewish leaders does not speak against Judaism any more than seeking to please the Jerusalem apostles would speak against Christianity. One may try to please any group of people for advancement. See also M.D. NANOS, "How Inter-Christian Approaches to Paul's Rhetoric Can Perpetuate Negative Valuations of Jewishness — Although Proposing to Avoid that Outcome", *Biblical Interpretation* 13 (2005) 262, against the view that Gal 1,13-14 impugns Judaism.

from his life in vv. 13-14 to a life of pleasing God in vv. 15-16: he left his position and work in Judaism to preach the gospel of Christ.

Therefore, to verify that his gospel is from God (vv. 11-12), Paul demonstrates that he seeks to please God (1,10) rather than to advance himself among human beings by pleasing them (1,10.13-14). He begins to do this in 1,15-17 with an allusion to his vision on the Damascus road. He does not describe it — even a detailed account would not constitute evidence that he had seen it. Instead, he shows his desire to please God by showing his lack of desire to please people, as the assumptions behind 1,10 allow, and thus in 1,15-17 he states his immediate response to the vision as a negative: he did not consult with flesh and blood or go up to Jerusalem to the other apostles. The former enthusiast for the traditions of his fathers (1,14) now invites no human input (1,16), and he cites his itinerary to prove it. Rather than join the apostles in Jerusalem, he turned immediately to Arabia and Damascus (1,17). But Paul does not focus on his Gentile mission. Instead he recites in 1,18-20 the particulars that emphasize his minimal contact with Jerusalem and the apostles: he first went to Jerusalem after three years among the Gentiles; he stayed only fifteen days; he was visiting Peter; and he saw no other apostle but James during that time. His stress on the apostles highlights the contrast to his former life in pursuing status because they are the ones he would resort to if he wished to advance himself in Christianity as he had in Judaism³⁷.

This contrasts with the views of both Jeffrey Peterson and Jean-Noël Aletti. Peterson sees Peter's hospitality in 1,18-19 as suggesting "a mutual recognition of the fundamental concord between their

³⁷ To show that his goal is not to gain the favor of people, Paul sharpens his focus by considering the objective in pleasing people and by specifying the particular people he would need to please to accomplish that goal. According to 1,13-14 the objective is status, and in Paul's case this appears to be the only likely candidate. His life as an apostle consisted of hardship, and prominence in Christian circles is one of the few benefits believers could offer. To specify prominence as the goal of pleasing people in turn narrows the range of people Paul would need to please. He had advanced in Judaism beyond his peers. If rank were his goal in Christianity, he would pursue it at the highest level, that of the pillar apostles. Therefore to show that he does not seek to please people, Paul only needs to show that he does not seek to please the apostles, to win their approval for self-advancement.

[Peter's and Paul's] two apostolic missions"³⁸. However, the details Paul includes — the three year gap, the brevity of the visit, and the encounter with James — are irrelevant to concord between Peter and Paul. Aletti, on the other hand, notes that Paul would have to bring up his stay with Peter to counter the idea that he had been catechized by the Jerusalem apostles. He finds Paul to emphasize features that minimize the importance of the trip³⁹. Fifteen days in Peter's house, however, allows time for extensive deliberation on the gospel. Furthermore, the incident is important: Paul's brief association with the Jerusalem apostles — of whom he met only two — is evidence that he did not ingratiate himself with them or seek to rise through their ranks.

In 1,21 Paul continues a tight account of his movements. Here ἔπειτα "then" in 1,21 introduces Paul's next move because he emphasizes leaving Jerusalem for Gentile lands. As Paul's journey to Arabia and Damascus in 1,17b says first of all that he was not in Jerusalem (1,17a), so his departure to Cilicia and Syria in 1,21 says that he left Jewish territory when he left Jerusalem. His explicit statement in vv. 22-23 that the Judean Christians knew him by reputation but not by face again points up his lack of time in Judea⁴⁰. Citing witnesses that he evangelized among the Gentiles while hardly contacting Jerusalem completes his proof that he did not advance himself among the apostles, at least up to this point⁴¹. Paul thus shows that he disregarded status in human circles but strove instead to glorify God (v. 24). Verses 13-24 therefore establish v. 10 that Paul no longer seeks to please people but God, and v. 10 gives the grounds for vv. 11-12 that his gospel is from God. Unlike the other theories of how Paul substantiates his gospel, this

³⁸ J. PETERSON, "The Extent of Christian Theological Diversity: Pauline Evidence", *Restoration Quarterly* 47 (2005) 7.

³⁹ ALETTI, "Galates 1-2", 314-315.

⁴⁰ Since Luke records that Paul had persecuted Jewish Christians (Acts 8,1-4), how could the Judeans not know his face? Paul's point is that they had not seen him as a preacher of the gospel. Now when Paul visited Jerusalem the first time after his conversion, Luke records that he did preach (Acts 9,26-28); but fifteen days (Gal 1,18) of preaching would allow only a small number of Christians in Judea to see him. For other viewpoints, see DUNN, *Galatians*, 81; LONGENECKER, *Galatians*, 41.

⁴¹ That Judaizers visited Paul's churches in Acts 15,1 implies also that the Jewish Christians knew Paul's gospel was law free.

theory derives from the text (v. 10) and fits the details of Paul's account in chap. 1.

Does Paul's desire to please God attest to the truth of his gospel? Arguments from motivation were not unknown in Paul's day: in John 7,18 Jesus pointed to his goal of glorifying God as proof of his own righteousness. If Paul set his heart to please God, it would follow that he would truthfully recount his vision of Christ and would preach the message God gave him unaltered.

If Paul were simply mistaken, he was not mistaken about having seen a vision because there were witnesses with him — he would hardly travel to Damascus alone if his purpose was to persecute the church (cf. Acts 9,1-9; Gal 1,13.17). Paul could of course have been mistaken about the message he heard in the vision. But then one would have to explain why God specially chose Paul as a messenger and yet left him not only to bungle the message the rest of his life but to do so in the same way the pillar apostles must have in 2,7-9. Sincerity in striving after God does, in Paul's case, argue for his message.

b) Objections to Paul's Argument

There are various points of Paul's sincerity and his argument, however, that scholars have questioned. They note, for example, that 1 Cor 15,3, a parallel to Gal 1,11-12 on Paul's reception of the gospel, uses παραδίδωμι "hand down" and παραλαμβάνω "receive" to say that what Paul received he also passed on to the Corinthians. Since the combination of these two words may indicate traditions that are handed down, some exegetes assume that Paul claims in Galatians 1 to have received the gospel from the Lord directly and in 1 Corinthians 15 to have received it as a tradition from other people⁴². However, Paul uses both words in 1 Cor 11,23

⁴² See BDAG, παραλαμβάνω, 768 on the combination of words indicating tradition. See J.T. SANDERS, "Paul's Autobiographical Statements in Galatians 1-2", *JBL* 85 (1966) 335-343, for the unvarnished view that Paul contradicts himself. See W. BAIRD, "Visions, Revelation, and Ministry: Reflections on 2 Cor 12:1-5 and Gal 1:11-17", *JBL* 104 (1985) 651-662; R.Y.K. FUNG, "Revelation and Tradition: The Origins of Paul's Gospel", *EQ* 57 (1985) 23-41; MATERA, *Galatians*, 53; SCHÜTZ, *Apostolic Authority*, 129-131; SILVA, *Interpreting Galatians*, 157-158; WINGER, "Tradition, Revelation, Gospel", 65-86, for various ways of handling this apparent contradiction.

to say that he received the history and tradition of the Lord's supper from the Lord and handed it on to the Corinthians. Therefore, to label the first verses of 1 Corinthians 15 "tradition" does not imply that Paul acquired his understanding from other people rather than the Lord. Whether or not he received knowledge of the resurrection appearances of 1 Cor 15,5-7 through a revelation, from the eyewitnesses themselves, or both, Paul claims in Galatians to have received the gospel message (of 1 Cor 15,3-4) from Christ; and this does not conflict with 1 Corinthians 15 because there he does not cite the source(s) of his tradition.

Paul's stay with Peter during his first trip to Jerusalem has also troubled scholars because it allows the possibility that Paul heard the gospel from Peter — fifteen days would give him time for this. After all, whatever Paul meant by ἱστορῆσαι "visit" in 1,18 — to gain information (e.g., Dunn) or simply to visit (e.g., Martyn) — it would be difficult to think of Peter and Paul, whose work was in the gospel, avoiding a discussion of it⁴³. Yet Paul notes here, not the topics of conversation, but the brevity of the visit and his neglect of the other apostles. His point is not that he and Peter never discussed Christ. But fifteen days would not give him time to advance himself in Christian circles, and showing that supports his assertion in v. 10 that he does not still please people. Had he received the gospel from Peter and had he desired status among the Jerusalem apostles, he would have stayed among them in Judea⁴⁴.

But why does he include a visit with Peter three years after he began evangelizing? Although such an occasion is three years too late to have any bearing on how he received the gospel, Paul does not have evidence that he had not received it from the apostles until

⁴³ DUNN, "Paul and Jerusalem", 463-466; MARTYN, *Galatians*, 171. For a good discussion of the meaning of the term, see J.D.G. DUNN, "Once More — Gal 1:18: ἱστορῆσαι Κηφᾶν: In Reply to Otfried Hofius", *ZNW* 76 (1985) 138-139; O. HOFIUS, "Gal 1:18: ἱστορῆσαι Κηφᾶν", *ZNW* 75 (1984) 73-85; K.F. ULRICH, "Grave Verbum, ut de re Magn: Nochmals Gal 1,18: ἱστορῆσαι Κηφᾶν", *ZNW* 81 (1990) 262-269.

⁴⁴ Of course he could have received the gospel from Peter and still desired to please God. Paul is not arguing that receiving the gospel from Peter would impugn his message. Because the Galatians were turning to another gospel, he needs to show that the gospel he preached is true; and since he received it from God, he argues on that basis. Had he received the gospel another way, he would defend it on other grounds.

his reputation as a gospel preacher reached believers who knew he was not associating with the other apostles (1,22-23). Paul gives his itinerary up to this point.

Paul's testimony about his trip to Jerusalem has been called into question as well because of the correspondence between Gal 1,18-19 and Acts 9,26-29. In both instances Paul goes from Damascus to Jerusalem (Acts 9,22-26; Gal 1,17-18); and in both Paul then leaves Jerusalem for the same area, with Acts 9,30 naming the cities, Cesarea and Tarsus, and Gal 1,21 the regions, Syria and Cilicia. Luke and Paul have different emphases: Luke focuses on the trouble Paul stirs up (Acts 9,28-30) whereas Paul relates the brevity of his visit and of his contact with Peter and James (Gal 1,18-19). The difficulty is that Luke has Barnabas bring Paul to the apostles (Acts 9,27), and Paul denies seeing all but two of them. Although it might be said that two apostles are still apostles, Luke did say "the apostles" and not merely "some apostles". And although other biblical writers could be a bit loose with their references by today's standards — Paul says Jesus appeared to Cephas then to the twelve (1 Cor 1,5) at a time when there were only eleven apostles, and John says Jesus appeared to "the disciples" when Thomas was absent (John 20,19, 24) — two would hardly constitute a quorum. However, it was valid in Luke's time, as it often is in our own, to refer to the leaders of a group as the group itself. For example, Pilate says in John 19,35 that Jesus' nation and the chief priests delivered Jesus to him when it was the chief priests as the leaders of the nation, together with at most a small portion of the populace, that actually did so⁴⁵. As Gal 2,9 indicates, Peter, James, and John were the leaders among the apostles. If Barnabas brought Paul to two of the three leaders, Luke could correctly say that Barnabas brought Paul to the apostles.

c) Conclusion: Galatians 1,11-12 via 1,10

As noted earlier, Paul constructs in 1,10 two mutually exclusive but all inclusive categories: that of pleasing people and that of pleasing God. By arguing that he kept his distance from Jerusalem and the other apostles when he began preaching, Paul demonstrates

⁴⁵ See Matt 26,14-15; 27,9 for another example. The "sons of Israel" in 27,9 were the chief priests in 26,14-15.

that status in a human system is no longer his goal, that is, that he is not in the first category. This, then, constitutes evidence that he is in the second category, that is, that he sought to please God and therefore that he taught the gospel he received from God. He has not, however, finished validating his gospel. He must establish not only that he received the gospel from God but that he did not rewrite the message later. For this he need not relate every evangelistic encounter he had but simply show that when the gospel was threatened, he did not waver on it. Again, it is threats or potential threats from apostles that matter because if he alters his message to gain in prominence, he alters it for them. He recounts two incidents.

2. *The Jerusalem Council: Galatians 2,1-10*

In 2,1-10 Paul summarizes his dealings with the apostles during a time when false brethren in the church were compelling Gentile converts to be circumcised. Most scholars equate Gal 2,1-10 with the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 because both the issues and the people are the same, but Paul's evidence for the truth of his gospel has brought both his account and Luke's into question. Because ἔπειτα "then" in 1,18.21 leads to the next step in Paul's itinerary, scholars take ἔπειτα in 2,1 to mean that Paul relates every destination of his travels. Furthermore, they argue that with or without ἔπειτα in 2,1, Paul must include every visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 1-2⁴⁶. The problem, however, is that if Paul recounts each visit to Jerusalem, then the second trip Paul records in Galatians must be the second trip he made in fact, but Luke records the famine visit of Acts 11,27-30; 12,25 between Paul's first visit in Acts 9 and the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Therefore, a minority of scholars equates Gal 2,1-10 with Acts 11,28-30; others believe Luke to be mistaken; and still others believe the error to be on the part of Paul⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., BRUCE, *Galatians*, 106; DUNN, *Galatians*, 87; LONGENECKER, *Galatians*, 36. This idea is almost universal.

⁴⁷ See LONGENECKER, *Galatians*, lxxvii-lxxxiii, 47; BRUCE, *Galatians*, 108-109, for the identification of Gal 2,1-10 with Acts 11,27-30. See J. KNOX, *Chapters in a Life of Paul* (ed. D.R.A. HARE) (Macon, GA 1987) 35-40; LUEDEMANN, *Apostle to Gentiles*, 21, for the view that Luke was mistaken. See

These conclusions, however, fail to follow Paul's line of reasoning in chap. 1. Paul argues that he received the gospel from God by showing that he did not learn it from the apostles. Therefore, his evidence must include a record of any visit to Jerusalem. But when Paul adduced witnesses to the fact that he was preaching the gospel to Gentiles while unknown by sight in Judea in 1,22-24, he finished his proof that he had not gone to the apostles for his message. An event that occurred more than a decade after he began preaching the gospel (2,1) is irrelevant to an argument about his reception of the gospel. He now needs to verify that he did not change the message later, and for that he no longer needs to relate every trip to Jerusalem or meeting with an apostle. Ἐπειτα in 2,1 need not indicate the next consecutive movement but the next relevant movement⁴⁸. Even in 1,21 it was not ἔπειτα but Paul's argument that required a Gentile region as his immediate destination after Jerusalem: he wanted to show that he promptly left Jewish territory (1,22). In 2,1 ἔπειτα does not lock Paul in Syria and Cilicia during the years between his visits to Jerusalem in 1,18 and 2,1; it simply introduces a trip he made some years after he entered the two regions, a trip that will pertain to his current argument.

With little introduction beyond a time gap and the names of his traveling companions, Paul begins chap. 2 with his motivation for attending the Council. If William Walker, Jr. is correct in understanding the grammar of 2,1-5, Paul gives two reasons: God's revelation (v. 2) and the presence of false brethren (v. 4)⁴⁹. Even if

HALL, "Rhetorical Effect", 315; SANDERS, "Paul's Autobiographical Statements", 340, for the view that Paul was in error.

⁴⁸ For example, in 1 Cor 15,5-8 Paul writes of Jesus' resurrection appearances. Verse 5 says that Jesus was seen of Cephas and then of the twelve. Verse 6 adds that then (ἔπειτα) over 500 saw him and v. 7 that then (ἔπειτα) James and then all the apostles saw him. Last of all (v. 8) Paul saw him. If we read ἔπειτα in vv. 6-7 as giving a complete account of Christ's resurrection appearances from the time Peter saw him in v. 5 to the time all the apostles saw him in v. 7, we find that Paul omitted, for example, the two men on the road to Emmaus and other people gathered with the apostles, which Paul's traveling companion records in Luke 24, esp. vv. 13-15.33-36. Paul, however, is neither dishonest nor mistaken — he simply does not need to include every witness to make his point — and he uses ἔπειτα to indicate order, not completeness.

⁴⁹ W.O. WALKER, JR., "Why Paul Went to Jerusalem: The Interpretation of Galatians 2:1-5", *CBQ* 54 (1992) 505-510, understands δὲ κατὰ in v. 2 to

Walker is incorrect, it is clear that in 2,1-5 Paul describes a trip to Jerusalem with his partner, Barnabas, and the Gentile, Titus. At the conference, Paul laid his gospel before the apostles and resisted the attendees who would have Gentiles circumcised. This threat to the gospel is Paul's focus in 2,1-5. In v. 2 he expresses concern for his own churches (the ones for whom he "ran") because of the potential outcome of the conference. He is not unsure of the gospel — chapter one makes that clear — but he speaks privately to the apostles (τοῖς δοκοῦσιν, v. 2) because if the Judaizers won them over, the apostles would tack circumcision onto their gospel message. This doctrine would then infiltrate Paul's own congregations so that they would no longer stand for the truth of the gospel (2,5). In other words, Paul did not attend this conference by revelation to see that he understood the gospel correctly but to see that the Jerusalem apostles remained faithful to it. And they did (vv. 2,7-9).

Ideas from Gal 1,6-12 guide Paul's pen in 2,1-10. Paul repeats in 2,2.5 the concern he expressed in 1,6 that the Gentiles continue in the gospel. He adds in 2,4-5, as he affirmed in 1,8-9, that he did not tolerate those altering the message. He also alludes to pleasing God rather than people (cf. 1,10) when he says that he went to the conference by revelation (2,2), and the status of the pillar apostles meant nothing to him (2,6). Finally, 1,11-12 will lead Paul to his point: his gospel is not of human origin.

Verses 2,7-10 are often understood to give the point of 2,1-10: the pillar apostles accepted Paul as an equal, thus confirming both his gospel and apostolate⁵⁰. However, as argued earlier, in v. 6 Paul

introduce the first reason and διὰ δέ to introduce the second. If he is correct, the grammar in this pericope is not the shipwreck it is often purported to be. See A.C.M. BLOMMERDE, "Is There an Ellipsis between Galatians 2,3 and 2,4", *Bib* 56 (1975) 100-102; B. ORCHARD, "Ellipsis between Galatians 2:3 and 2:4", *Bib* 54 (1973) 469-481; B. ORCHARD, "Once Again the Ellipsis between Gal 2:3 and 2:4", *Bib* 57 (1976) 254-255, for two different possible understandings of Paul's grammar. Sorting out the syntax in 2,3-4 is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁵⁰ E.g., BREHM, "Relationship with Apostles", 11; DOCKERY, "Paul's Defense", 161. Similarly, DUNN, "Paul and Jerusalem", 471, says it confirms Paul's gospel and ministry; and P.E. KOPTAK, "Rhetorical Identification in Paul's Autobiographical Narrative: Galatians 1:13-2:14", *JSNT* 40 (1990) 104-105, his gospel and equality. D.L. BARTLETT, "Preaching to Galatians", *Int* 54 (2000) 285, although acknowledging that "the Jerusalem leaders accepted his [Paul's] apostleship on his terms", nonetheless sees their

himself dispels the thought that apostolic recognition ratifies either his gospel or apostolate: people, whose opinions do not carry weight with God, cannot confirm an apostolate or gospel given by God. Therefore Paul does not base the proof of his message on a vote of the Jerusalem Council.

Instead Paul brings his argument to a head in v. 6: the pillar apostles added nothing to his gospel (cf. 1,11-12). This does not imply that they had the right to do so⁵¹. Paul was not intimidated at their position because God respects no one's person. But Paul needs to show that he did not change the gospel when there was a threat to it, so he first depicts the threat (2,1-5); he then affirms that he did not alter the message (2,6); and he proceeds from there to substantiate that point (2,7-10). Τοὐναντίον "on the contrary" in v. 7 indicates that the apostles' acceptance of Paul in 2,7-10 is a contrast to the idea of their adding to his gospel in 2,6. In other words, the reason Paul writes vv. 7-10 is to support his assertion in v. 6 that the apostles added nothing to him: the apostles did not tamper with Paul's message; on the contrary, they accepted him as an apostle on equal terms⁵². He was no junior partner they could take the liberty to instruct, but one with a God-given ministry corresponding to Peter's (vv. 7-8). In fact, the very division of labor in v. 9 left Paul without a Jerusalem apostle in authority over his mission. Thus v. 10, by including the provision that Paul continue to collect money for the Jerusalem poor, indicates not Paul's subordination in fulfilling a stipulation of Jerusalem but his connection with them in ministry and true partnership in the gospel. Galatians 2,1-10, therefore, is written to show that in a time when the gospel was at risk, Paul did not change his message, and he

acceptance as Paul's point. ALETTI, "Galates 1-2", 315, 317, takes the purpose of 2,1-10 to be the formal approval of Paul's gospel by the Church and 2,11-14 to mean that the approval must not be a mere formality.

⁵¹ *Contra* DUNN, "Paul and Jerusalem", 472.

⁵² Scholars debate whether or not the handshake shows equality. See J.N. SUGGIT, "'The Right Hand of Fellowship': (Galatians 2:4) [sic]", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 49 (1984) 51-54, for the view that it indicates mutual recognition in Gal 2,9. R.E. CIAMPA, *The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2* (WUNT 102; Tübingen 1998) 151, says the offer of the hand could be done by the superior or inferior and so says nothing about the relative position of the men shaking hands. In any case, the context supports an equality between Paul and the pillar apostles.

offers the acceptance extended to him by the pillar apostles as evidence. It was not Paul who sought status among the apostles at the Council but the apostles who took note of him (vv. 7-9)⁵³. And neither compromised.

3. *Peter at Antioch: Galatians 2,11-21*

In 2,11-21 Paul gives a second example of his determination to withstand a threat to the gospel. This time Peter comes to Antioch and, because of his fear of the people from James, withdraws from the table of the Gentile Christians. The other Jewish Christians, including Barnabas, follow him. Paul recognizes this as a move away from the gospel and publicly rebukes Peter for living like a Gentile while compelling the Gentiles to Judaize. For the purposes of this paper, the event itself needs little explanation except perhaps to say that Peter's walk away from the gospel was indirect and unwitting; otherwise it would not have taken a Paul to recognize it, and Barnabas would not likely have been beguiled by it. Peter was not saying that Gentiles must follow Jewish food laws to be saved. He returned to the law, not for justification — he and Paul still agreed about that (2,16) — but for daily living before God⁵⁴. Paul shows in 2,15-21 the inconsistency of this position because justification without the law (2,16) implies living to God without the law as well (2,19).

How exactly does Paul use the incident at Antioch in his argument that his gospel is true (per 1,6-12)? Peter's unintentional turn from the gospel still posed a threat to it (cf. 1,6-9), and Paul's indifference to remaining in anyone's good graces in this instance (cf. 1,10) goes without saying. Here the challenge to the gospel is

⁵³ It was James, Peter, and John who saw that the gospel was committed to Paul (v. 7.9) and who extended the right hand of fellowship to him and Barnabas (v. 9). In other words, they took the initiative, not Paul. Paul walks a fine line in 2,1-10 because his new status among the apostles could be misconstrued as a sell-out: Paul changed his gospel for a position among the apostles. Of course 2,11-14 should put such speculation to rest.

⁵⁴ *Contra* P.J. ACHTEMEIER, "An Elusive Unity: Paul, Acts, and the Early Church", *CBQ* 48 (1986) 19; DUNN, *Galatians*, 114-116. Therefore, also, Peter's behavior need not place this event before the Jerusalem Council, *contra* LUEDEMANN, *Apostle to Gentiles*, 75. MATERA, *Galatians*, 88, also considers this possible.

indirect, but Paul perceives the implications of Peter's behavior. Paul understands that people are to live before God in the same manner as that by which they are justified: if they are justified by the law, they are to live life according to the law; and if they are justified by faith, to live by faith. Peter's claim, then, to live before God by means of the law is an implicit claim to justification by means of the law, and this constitutes a denial of the gospel. To follow Paul's argument in 2,15-21 more fully is the subject of another essay⁵⁵. The point here is that the gospel was in jeopardy, and by citing witnesses to the conversation in Antioch in which he defends the gospel, Paul is again offering evidence to the Galatians that he did not change his message⁵⁶.

Has Paul in only two pericopes adequately shown that he did not change the gospel after receiving it from God? The two events offer multiple witnesses to testify that Paul openly defended the gospel in both Jewish and Gentile territory. That some of the witnesses in Judea overlap with those at the Jerusalem Council and that some at the Jerusalem Council heard Paul in Antioch lend continuity to Paul's proof and make it difficult for anyone to accuse him of corrupting the gospel between events.

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A major obstacle to understanding Gal 1,13-2,21 is that a writer may use a particular story to illustrate any one of a number of points. Paul's thesis in 1,6-12 and his direct statements within his narratives, however, guide the reader in discerning his purpose and

⁵⁵ It is sufficient here just to add that the argument itself does not validate the gospel. The statement in 2,16 — that justification is by faith and not by works of the law — is a belief Paul holds in common with Peter, not one he proves to him. Paul summarizes the gospel in 2,16 and simply draws implications from it in the rest of the passage.

⁵⁶ Some scholars assume that Paul lost the argument with Peter because Paul does not state Peter's response, e.g., DUNN, *Galatians*, 130; LONGENECKER, *Galatians*, 79; MARTYN, *Galatians*, 153. After all, if Peter backed down, would this not add weight to Paul's argument? To ask the question is to forget Paul's purpose in 1,6-12. He is not interested in developing human backing for his gospel, but in showing that the message he preached is the one the Lord taught him.

in ruling out three common views of Gal 1,13–2,21 as a poor fit for the text. That Paul's apostolate verifies his gospel ignores his emphasis in 1,8; 2,6.11-14 that one's status does not prove the truth of one's message. That Paul defends himself against unstated accusations begs the question from the start. That Paul sets himself up as a paradigm leaves his gospel without a proof and too much of the text unaccounted for.

Paul's purpose in 1,6-12 drives his argument in 1,13–2,21. The Galatians are turning aside after a false gospel (1,6-9), and Paul would convince them of the truth of the gospel he taught them (1,10-12). He therefore sets up two categories in 1,10 — that of seeking to please people and that of seeking to please God — that are both mutually exclusive and all inclusive in the sense that Paul will be doing one or the other. Paul then defends his gospel on the basis of his life motivation. To show that he preaches the gospel he received from God, it suffices for Paul to show that he desires to please God. Using the dichotomy he set up in 1,10, he demonstrates his desire to please God by arguing that he no longer vies for status among people by pleasing them. In 1,13-24, therefore, Paul emphasizes his lack of contact with the apostles to establish that he did not work to advance himself among them. The inhabitants of Judea are his witnesses.

Paul then recounts two incidents to show that he did not alter his message later, even in the face of a threat to it. In 2,1-10 Paul makes the point that when false brethren challenged the gospel (2,1-5), the apostles did not add to his message (2,6). Their acceptance of him as an equal (2,7-10) is his proof. Then in 2,11-21 Paul stands up to Peter, Barnabas, and the rest of the Jewish believers in Antioch when they act in a manner contrary to the gospel. They then become witnesses to the constancy of his stand. Verse 1,10 is thus not a mere addendum to a rebuke, but a foundational element in support of Paul's message. This finishes Paul's initial line of defense to the Galatians of the divine origin of his gospel. He continues chap. 3 with evidence from their experience and from the Scripture.

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SUMMARY

Scholars agree that in Gal 1,13–2,21 Paul substantiates his gospel but disagree as to his method. The three common views: that Paul defends his apostolate, that he denies accusations, and that he functions as a paradigm conflict with the text. Instead, Paul sets up two categories in 1,10 — that of seeking to please people and that of seeking to please God — and defends his gospel by means of his Damascus experience together with his subsequent life motivation.

ANIMADVERSIONES

*Ré'shît et b^eré'shît encore et toujours**

Il est sans doute dans la nature des commencements de ne jamais finir. Tel est le destin du premier verset de la Genèse et de la Bible hébraïque qui ne cesse d'attiser la curiosité des lecteurs et d'échapper à leur emprise. Est-ce en raison de son obscurité ou de son trop plein de sens? La plupart des études ont porté essentiellement d'une part sur le sens, absolu ou relatif, de *b^eré'shît* et, d'autre part, sur la syntaxe des trois premiers versets. Beaucoup plus rares ont été les remises en question de la signification temporelle de ce premier mot.

Dans un article récent¹, W. Oswald a repris l'étude de *b^eré'shît* et, sur la base d'une analyse sémantique et grammaticale du mot *ré'shît* et de la préposition *b^e*, il a conclu au bien-fondé de la traduction suivante de Gn 1,1: "Als Erstling(swerk) hat Gott die Himmel und die Erde geschaffen". Son argumentation s'appuie sur l'emploi majoritaire de *ré'shît* au sens de "premices" dans la tradition Sacerdotale (P) et sur la fonction prédicative de la préposition *b^e*. Avant lui, J.B. Jordan² parvenait partiellement à la même conclusion: "To sum up, *reshit* is not used in Genesis 1:1 because the writer wanted a word that implies a period of time. Rather, it is used because the writer wanted a word that implies firstfruits". Toutefois, en raison de la fonction "clairement" temporelle à ses yeux de la préposition, il se refusait à traduire par "As the first fruits of His creation, God made the heavens and the earth", se contentant de laisser le sens de "premiers fruits" en filigrane du mot "commencement".

La présente étude vise essentiellement à compléter l'excellent article d'Oswald par un examen systématique plus détaillé de toutes les occurrences de *ré'shît* dans la Bible hébraïque, avec une attention toute particulière pour les emplois non directement cultuels, en essayant de déterminer si le terme est abstrait et temporel ou s'il désigne d'abord une réalité concrète³. Au vu des résultats elle proposera un élargissement de l'interprétation de Gn 1,1.

* Je tiens à remercier les Professeurs Horacio Simian-Yofre et Dany Nocquet pour leur relecture du manuscrit et leurs remarques judicieuses. La thèse défendue ici et ses faiblesses éventuelles demeurent totalement miennes.

¹ W. OSWALD, "Das Erstlingswerk Gottes – zur Übersetzung von Gen 1,1", *ZAW* 120 (2008) 417-421.

² J.B. Jordan, "John Sailhamer weighs in (I)", *Biblical Chronology* IX, n° 4 (avril 1997) 1-6.

³ Selon Joüon, *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique* (Rome² 1996) § 88

Les 51 emplois bibliques du mot dans la Bible hébraïque se partagent entre plusieurs champs sémantiques aux frontières d'ailleurs perméables: emplois temporels (début), culturels (prémices), profanes (premiers produits) et métaphoriques (meilleurs ou principaux)⁴. Puisque l'objectif final de l'étude est d'apporter un éclairage sur Gn 1,1 traditionnellement compris dans un sens temporel, l'examen des textes commencera par les emplois temporels du terme. Seront ensuite étudiés les emplois culturels, largement majoritaires, puis les emplois profanes et les emplois métaphoriques. Restera alors à se demander s'il est possible de repérer un *topos* de départ de ce vocabulaire et, finalement, si l'*hapax* que constitue Gn 1,1 peut se rapprocher de l'un ou l'autre des champs sémantiques étudiés.

1. Les emplois temporels (10)

Sur les 51 emplois seuls 9 sont indiscutablement et exclusivement temporels, une dixième occurrence (Gn 10,10) pouvant prêter à débat.

Dans cinq cas *ré'shît* (commencement, début, passé) est en opposition à *'aḥarît* (fin, dernier, avenir): Dt 11,12⁵; Is 46,10; Jb 8,7; 42,12; Qoh 7,8. La dimension temporelle y est explicite. La temporalité est relative comme l'atteste l'état construit, quatre fois sur cinq, des mots *ré'shît* et *'aḥarît*: ce sont les extrémités passées et à venir d'une histoire, d'une activité ou d'une période de temps. Même quand les mots sont à l'état absolu comme en Is 46,10, les traductions absolues "commencement" et "fin" conviennent sans doute moins bien que les traductions relatives "passé" et "avenir", "début" et "terme". En effet, le *ré'shît* du v. 10 renvoie aux *ri'shonôt* du v. 9, les "choses passées" dont il faut se souvenir, et le parallèle en 10b évoque le futur, "ce qui n'a pas encore été fait".

Quatre autres emplois explicitement et exclusivement temporels se trouvent, à l'état construit, en Jérémie — 26,1; 27,1; 28,1; 49,34 — pour marquer le début d'un règne: "au *début* du règne de X..."⁶. L'expression

l'afformante *it* affecte rarement des noms concrets et plus fréquemment des noms abstraits, mais il n'en donne que peu d'exemples dont, précisément, le mot *ré'shît*.

⁴ Oswald, "Erstlingswerk Gottes", distingue trois champs de signification: 'Anfang, Bestes, Erstling". Nous choisissons de subdiviser le troisième champ en usages profanes et usages culturels.

⁵ L'orthographe diffère légèrement: *réshît* et non *ré'shît*. Les rabbins expliquent cette singularité en notant que le mot devient ainsi l'anagramme de *tishri*, le premier mois de l'année. Selon Wellhausen cité par J. SKINNER, *Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh 1930) 12, Dt 11,12 serait le premier exemple du sens temporel de *ré'shît*, l'acception culturelle du mot étant donc antérieure.

⁶ On trouve en Dn 8,23 la formule parallèle et antithétique: "à la fin de leur règne".

ré'shît maml^ekût reproduit probablement l'expression technique babylonienne *resh sharruti* qui désigne la période entre la mort d'un roi et l'introduction officielle de son successeur lors du festival du Nouvel An suivant⁷. Jr 27,1 et 28,1 ne se retrouvent pas dans la Septante et, de l'avis assez général des commentateurs il s'agit là de gloses tardives⁸. La préposition *b^e* a ici valeur temporelle. En aucun de ces cas *ré'shît* n'a bien entendu le sens de commencement absolu.

Dans une étude récente⁹, P.J.M. Ayala a pris appui sur le sens technique de l'expression *ré'shît maml^ekût* pour son interprétation de Gn 1,1. Considérant, à la suite de Rashi et Ibn Ezra, que *ré'shît* est à l'état construit, il émet l'hypothèse que *maml^ekût* en serait le génitif sous-entendu, "en analogía con sus ocurrencias en *Jeremias*". Sur la base du culte de YHWH Roi tel qu'il se reflète dans les Psaumes 47, 93, 96, 97, 99, 103,19-22, 104 et par analogie avec la proclamation de "Marduk Roi" dans le mythe de création *Enuma Elish*¹⁰, Ayala traduit Gn 1,1 "En el año de su ascensión al trono, Dios creó el cielo y la tierra", et il en propose la paraphrase suivante: "Cuando Dios se sentó en su trono, creó el cielo y la tierra"¹¹. Royauté divine et création sont concomitantes. L'hypothèse ne manque pas d'intérêt. Gn 1,1 étant un *hapax* dans la littérature biblique et datant de la dernière phase rédactionnelle de P, aucun écho intra-biblique, aussi ténu et minoritaire soit-il, ne peut être écarté a priori. Toutefois on s'explique mal l'absence de ce génitif s'il doit être aussi fortement sous-entendu. L'explication qu'en donne Ayala — à savoir que les auteurs sacerdotaux auraient sciemment omis "un substantif féminin abstrait pour éviter toute réminiscence du paganisme akkado-babylonien" — n'est guère

⁷ W. RUDOLPH, *Jeremia* (HAT; Tübingen 1958) 155; J. BRIGHT, *Jeremiah* (AB 21; Garden City, NY 1965) 169; A. WEISER, *Das Buch Jeremia* (ATD 21; Göttingen 1966) 230; J.Ph. HYATT, "The Beginning of Jeremiah's Prophecy", *ZAW* 78 (1966) 204-214. Cette période, appelée aussi "accession year", est comptée au crédit du roi décédé. Voir aussi S. SMITH, "The Practice of Kingship in Early Semitic Kingdoms", *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship* (ed. S.H. HOOKE) (Oxford 1958) 29.

⁸ HYATT, "The Beginning", 205-206. Selon RUDOLPH, *Jeremia*, 162, le glossateur de Jr 28,1 ne comprenait plus le sens technique de l'expression puisqu'il la met en équation avec la 4^{ème} année de Sédécias. Les orthographes *maml^ekut* en Jr 26,1, *maml^eket*, en 27,1 et 28,1 et *malkût* en 49,34 seraient, de l'avis de Hyatt, des variantes textuelles sans importance.

⁹ P.J.M. AYALA, "Qué significa 'B^eresit' en Génesis 1:1", *QOL. Revista Bíblica Mexicana* 41 (2006) 69-82.

¹⁰ ANET, 66.

¹¹ AYALA, "Qué significa 'B^eresit'", 79.

convaincante. Par ailleurs la célébration d'un Nouvel An à Jérusalem sur le modèle assyro-babylonien et dont Gn 1,1 serait un "texte liturgique" reste encore à démontrer.

Il est un autre texte qui présente la même formulation qu'en Jérémie. Il se trouve dans l'histoire de Nimrod insérée dans la Table des Nations de Gn 10, aux versets 8-12. Il y est écrit que Nimrod, fils de Kush, "commença/fut le premier à être un puissant/potentat, héros sur la terre/le pays et le commencement de son règne/royaume (*ré'shît mamlaktô*) fut Babel ...". Outre les nombreuses questions que pose ce récit¹² communément attribué à J, il suffit pour notre propos de noter que, comme Speiser, Levin opte pour un prototype historique¹³. Levin observe très justement, malgré les incertitudes liées à quelques toponymes, que le contexte fait nettement référence à une marche-conquête depuis Shinar/Sumer au sud vers l'Assyrie au nord et non l'inverse comme dans l'hypothèse de Speiser et, logiquement, il conserve la traduction commune "au commencement de son règne". La probabilité du sens temporel de l'expression paraît en outre confirmée par les parallèles formels de Jérémie sur le modèle babylonien. On peut toutefois se demander si, comme observé par Rudolph en Jr 28,1¹⁴, l'expression n'a pas perdu le sens technique de *resh sharruti*. Resterait donc le sens général de "commencement".

2. Les emplois culturels: les prémices offertes dans le culte (22)¹⁵

20 fois le mot est un terme technique employé dans un contexte cultuel pour désigner les prémices, les premiers produits agricoles¹⁶ qui reviennent

¹² Toponymes, prototype (mythique ou historique) de Nimrod, correction par Albright de *w^ekalneh* en *w^ekullana*, sujet de *yaça'*, lien entre Kush (Ethiopie) et la Mésopotamie du sud, liaison rédactionnelle avec la Table des Nations P, hypothèse d'un récit épique utilisé par J. Voir l'état de la question et la bibliographie dans: Y. LEVIN, "Nimrod the Mighty, King of Kish, King of Sumer and Akkad", *VT* 52 (2002) 350-366.

¹³ "un équivalent hébreu composite de la dynastie Sargonide" (23^{ème} siècle B.C.) selon LEVIN, "Nimrod", 366; Tukulti-Ninurta I, roi d'Assyrie (13^{ème} siècle B.C.) selon Speiser, qui fait du "Nimrod" assyrien le conquérant de Sumer et traduit *ré'shît mamlaktô* par "the mainstays of his kingdom". Cf. E.A. SPEISER, *Genesis* (AB 1; Garden City, NY 1964) 67; ID., "In Search of Nimrod", *Oriental and Biblical Studies. Collected Essays of E.A. Speiser* (eds. J.J. FINKELSTEIN – M. GREENBERG) (Philadelphia, PA 1967) 41-52.

¹⁴ RUDOLPH, *Jeremia*, 162.

¹⁵ Ex 23,19; 34,26; Lv 2,12; 23,10; Nb 15,20.21; 18,12; Dt 18,4(bis); 26,2.10; 1 S 2,29; 15,21; Jr 2,3; Ez 20,40; 44,30 (bis); 48,14; Pr 3,9; Ne 10,38; 12,44; 2 Ch 31,5.

¹⁶ Plus précisément il s'agit sans doute des premiers produits manufacturés

de droit à Dieu et doivent donc lui être consacrés sous forme d'offrandes. Ces occurrences ne posent aucun problème exégétique et ne nécessitent donc pas un examen détaillé. Sans doute convient-il de rattacher à ces emplois deux occurrences qui, tout en comportant une part de métaphore, s'inscrivent clairement dans le même champ culturel :

Jr 2,3: "Israël est le bien sacré de YHWH, prémices de sa récolte. Tous ceux qui le mangent devront le payer". Israël est le premier produit de l'action de YHWH et, à ce titre, tout comme les prémices des récoltes ou du croît du bétail, il appartient exclusivement ("bien sacré") à YHWH et ne peut lui être soustrait¹⁷. Le champ sémantique est clairement celui du culte comme l'attestent le substantif "bien sacré" et le verbe "manger".

Ez 48,14: "Ils ne pourront rien vendre [du territoire des lévites] ni échanger et ils ne pourront pas aliéner les prémices du pays car c'est le bien sacré de YHWH". Ces "prémices du pays" sont-elles les premiers produits du territoire destinés à être offerts à YHWH? Ou bien est-ce le territoire lui-même des lévites qui est prémices, premier produit, de tout le pays d'Israël? Nombre de versions, à commencer par la LXX et la Vulgate, demeurent dans l'ambiguïté et se contentent de traduire "les prémices du pays"¹⁸. Certaines comprennent "les prémices du sol" comme désignant les produits agricoles du pays¹⁹. D'autres enfin voient dans "les prémices du pays" tout le territoire dévolu aux lévites²⁰. Les versions qui font du domaine des lévites les "prémices" du pays d'Israël semblent bien les mieux étayées. D'une part, en effet, le contexte traite de transactions foncières et non de transactions sur les produits du pays. Par ailleurs, l'appartenance à YHWH seul de toutes les prémices végétales et animales du pays concerne de droit le territoire d'Israël tout entier et non seulement le territoire des lévites. D'autre part, le terme "pays" désigne, dans l'ensemble du chapitre, la totalité des territoires dévolus aux tribus d'Israël. Le fait que beaucoup de traductions donnent au mot *ré'shît* le sens symbolique de "meilleure part" s'explique sans doute par le fait qu'un territoire

("first-processed") et non des premiers produits bruts (*bikkûrîm*, "first-ripe"). Telle est l'opinion, bien argumentée, de J. MILGROM, *Leviticus* (AB 3; Garden City, NY 1991) 190-191. Il arrive cependant que *ré'shît* et *bikkûrîm* soient parfois traités comme synonymes.

¹⁷ Traduction BJ. En général, les citations bibliques sont des traductions de l'auteur.

¹⁸ Luther, Elberfelder, KJ, ASV.

¹⁹ OST, Douay, TOB.

²⁰ JPS, RSV, REB, Osty, Eichrodt (ATD). A ma connaissance seules à garder le sens concret de "prémices" sont la Bible du Semeur ("Ce domaine constitue les prémices du pays, il est propriété sainte de l'Eternel"), et SGD 2004 ("On ne pourra ni échanger ni aliéner ces prémices du pays").

ne peut avoir le sens habituel de prémices agricoles. S'il est vrai en effet que "prémices" ne peut être pris ici dans son sens strict de premier produit végétal ou animal, la métaphore n'en est pas moins liée à l'usage cultuel. Elle souligne l'appartenance exclusive à YHWH du territoire des lévites et en fait le représentant auprès de YHWH de tout le pays. À preuves la motivation finale "car c'est la chose sainte de YHWH", ainsi que le recours au verbe "aliéner", littéralement "faire passer", verbe que l'on trouve précisément dans la loi sur les premiers-nés pour exprimer l'action d'offrir (Ex 13,12).

Le sens concret de *ré'shît* comme prémices ou premiers produits est bien établi dans ces emplois cultuels qui représentent, de loin, l'ensemble le plus important et le plus homogène de ses occurrences.

3. Emplois non cultuels au sens de premiers produits (13)²¹

Hors du champ explicitement cultuel le sens concret de premier produit se retrouve 13 fois, soit dans un contexte de génération soit dans un contexte de création.

En Gn 49,3, Jacob appelle Ruben "mon premier-né, ma force, les prémices de ma virilité" (*bekorî 'attah kohî w^{eré}'shît 'ônî*). Le mot est ici en parallèle avec *bekor* "premier-né". De même, dans la loi de Dt 21,15-17 sur le droit d'aînesse, le "premier-né" du père est appelé "prémices de sa virilité". Le premier-né est le premier produit de la capacité d'engendrement du père. Il en va de même dans les psaumes 78,51 et 105,36 où les "premiers-nés des Égyptiens" sont appelés les "prémices de leur virilité". En Osée 9,10, *b^{eré}'shîtah* — "dans sa primeur" — est peut-être un ajout. Absent de la version syriaque, il rompt en effet la métrique du verset. Toutefois, la plupart des traductions le maintiennent, comme d'ailleurs le manuscrit trouvé à Qumran²². Le terme est généralement rendu par "dans sa primeur", "à sa première saison" ... Il s'agirait donc des premiers fruits (*bikkûrîm*) d'un figuier "dans ses premiers produits", "dans sa première saison", c'est-à-dire d'un jeune figuier qui en est à sa première production. Am 6,6 fait aussi référence aux huiles de première presse: "ils s'enduisent des huiles de première presse" ou "huiles vierges". Même si la qualité supérieure de cette huile est ainsi soulignée il n'en reste pas moins que le sens est d'abord celui de premier produit.

Le texte de Mi 1,13 est sans doute aussi à inclure dans la même série d'emplois du mot *ré'shît*. En 1,13 le prophète s'en prend à la cité de Lakish

²¹ Gn 49,3; Dt 21,17; Os 9,10; Am 6,6; Mi 1,13; Jb 40,19; Pr 1,7; 4,7; 8,22; 17,14; Pss 78,51; 105,36; 111,10.

²² 4QXIlg. Voir: M. ABEGG – P. FLINT – E. ULRICH, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (San Francisco, CA 1999) 423.

qui fut “*ré'shît hatta't* de la fille de Sion”²³. La raison en est peut-être que cette cité fut liée à la stratégie militaire de la royauté davidico-salomoniennne souvent condamnée par les prophètes. Les traducteurs rendent généralement l'expression par “le commencement du péché”. La signification de la phrase ne fait pas de doute: c'est bien là en effet qu'a débuté la faute de Sion. Mais en donnant à *ré'shît* le sens concret de premier produit et non celui, abstrait, de commencement, le sens est encore plus net: la cité de Lakish en elle-même est la première manifestation de la faute et des rébellions d'Israël, le premier fruit de son péché.

En Jb 40,19, Béhémot est appelé “*ré'shît* des voies de Dieu”. Le contexte est celui de la création. Les traductions sont partagées. La majorité opte pour un terme concret: la première des œuvres de Dieu, le chef d'œuvre, le premier-né des voies de Dieu, la principale œuvre. D'autres choisissent un terme abstrait: “the chief of the ways of God”, “the beginning of the ways of God”, “der Anfang der Wege Gottes”, “en-tête des routes d'El”, “le commencement des voies de Dieu”, “le premier des chemins de Dieu”²⁴. La Septante et la Vulgate reproduisent ici leurs traductions ambivalentes de Gn 1,1, respectivement *ἀρχή* et *principium*. Il semble cependant que la suite du verset — “celui qui l'a fait” — incite à préférer pour *ré'shît* le sens concret de premier produit.

Dans le texte très proche de Pr 8,22 la sagesse déclare: “YHWH m'a acquise”²⁵ *ré'shît* de sa voie”. En raison de la similitude patente avec le texte précédent on s'attendrait à ce que les traductions se partagent ici aussi de la même manière entre termes concrets et termes abstraits. Curieusement il n'en est rien. Seules quelques traductions optent pour un terme concret: “la première de ses œuvres”, “prémices de son œuvre”, “the first of his works”, “prémices de ses voies/de son action”. La grande majorité traduit *ré'shît* par un mot abstrait — “commencement” — et quasiment tous les traducteurs en font une locution adverbiale: “au commencement”²⁶.

²³ Mi 1,13b.c est couramment considéré comme un ajout rédactionnel pour des raisons de rythme et de contenu. Cf. J.M. POWIS SMITH, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Micah, Zephaniah and Nahum* (ICC; Edinburgh 1959) 47-48; A. WEISER, *Die Propheten* (ATD 24; Göttingen 1959) 241-242. A la suite de K. ELLIGER – S.J. SCHWANTES, “Critical Notes on Micah I 10-16”, *VT* 14 (1964) 454-461, cf. p. 458, corrige *ré'shît* en *be'er-shewa'*.

²⁴ Sic, entre autres, KJ, Luther, AV, REB, Weiser (ATD).

²⁵ Le sens précis du verbe *qanah* — acquérir, posséder, créer — n'est pas discuté ici. Il suffit de noter que ce verbe, qui signifie le plus souvent “acheter”, commande régulièrement un accusatif d'objet concret: Gn 4,1; 25,10; 33,19; 47,19; Ex 15,16; 21,2; Lv 25,14; Jos 24,3.

²⁶ Pour une argumentation en faveur de la traduction adverbiale voir G.A. YEE, “An Analysis of Prov 8,22-31 According to Style and Structure”,

Il semble bien que, dans ce texte de Prov 8,22, les traducteurs aient eu en tête les premiers mots de la Genèse et qu'ils aient plus ou moins consciemment suppléé dans le texte des Proverbes la préposition *b^e* avec un sens temporel, ce qu'ont d'ailleurs fait explicitement la Syriacque et le Targum. Outre qu'il convient de préserver la syntaxe de l'hébreu, le sens concret me paraît, ici aussi, s'imposer, ne serait-ce qu'en raison du parallélisme avec le terme éminemment concret *p^ealawy* — “ses œuvres” — en 22b.

Dans deux textes quasiment identiques mais inversés, c'est aussi, semble-t-il, le même sens concret de “premier produit” qu'il convient de retenir. Il s'agit de Pr 1,7 (*yir^e'at YHWH ré'shît da'at*) et Ps 111,10 (*ré'shît hokmah yir^e'at YHWH*). Communément traduits “la crainte du Seigneur est le commencement / le principe / le fondement du savoir / de la sagesse”, ces textes sont généralement compris comme établissant une relation de cause à effet entre la crainte Dieu et l'acquisition de la sagesse: la crainte de YHWH est première et c'est elle qui donne la sagesse. Si, par contre, on donne à *ré'shît* le sens concret de premier produit, la logique est inversée: “le premier produit/fruit de la sagesse est la crainte de YHWH”. Ce n'est plus la crainte de Dieu qui engendre la sagesse, mais bien celle-ci qui engendre la crainte de YHWH²⁷. Cette interprétation plaçant la sagesse à l'origine de tout, y compris la crainte du Seigneur, est en totale harmonie avec le contexte de Pr 1,1-7 et 8,22-31 et, plus explicitement encore, avec 2,1-9: “... si tu prêtes l'oreille à la sagesse et inclines ton esprit à l'intelligence..., si tu la recherches comme de l'argent., *alors* (*'az*) tu comprendras la crainte de YHWH et tu trouveras la connaissance de Dieu.” Le texte de Pr 9,10, où le mot *ré'shît* est remplacé par le substantif abstrait *t^ehillah* suit également, en dépit des apparences, la même logique: “le commencement de la sagesse est la crainte de YHWH” (*t^ehillat hokmah yir^e'at YHWH*). Tout le contexte de 9,1-12 parle en effet uniquement de la sagesse et de ses

ZAW 94 (1982) 58-66. L'auteur voit en *ré'shît* un “Adverb of Time” et traduit “at the beginning” (62), et pourtant la structure qu'il développe (61) met ce mot en parallèle avec des mots concrets (abîmes, sources, cours d'eau, montagnes, collines). Parmi les traductions ayant opté pour un terme abstrait, rares sont celles qui traitent *ré'shît* comme un double accusatif ou prédicat. Par contre toutes les traductions ayant choisi un terme concret traitent *ré'shît* comme double accusatif ou prédicat, ce qui, me semble-t-il, est plus conforme à la syntaxe de l'hébreu, syntaxe d'ailleurs respectée par la LXX et la Vulgate. Il est à noter que Ringgren: H. RINGGREN – W. ZIMMERLI. *Sprüche – Prediger* (ATD 16; Göttingen 1962) 38-41, après avoir traduit par “als Anfang seines Tuns”, utilise dans son commentaire une expression concrète: “als erstes seiner Werke”. R.B.Y. SCOTT, *Proverbs. Ecclesiastes* (AB 18; Garden City, NY 1965) 68, 73, va très loin dans l'abstraction: “The Lord possessed me, the first principle of his sovereignty”.

²⁷ OSWALD, “Erstlingswerk Gottes”, 417.

bienfaits²⁸. La sagesse est bien la source de tout et son premier produit est la crainte de YHWH.

Plus tard le Siracide s'attachera à intégrer la sagesse dans l'histoire de la révélation, et le tout premier verset du livre affirme d'ailleurs sans ambages que "toute sagesse est de YHWH"²⁹ et dès lors inscrite dans le cadre de la révélation (Si 1,6-9). Si, comme en Pr 8,22, la sagesse est créée première par lui avant toutes choses (Si 1,4), la "crainte du Seigneur" (vv. 11-20) devient toutefois le "commencement / fondement / principe", "l'accomplissement", "la couronne et 'la racine'" de la sagesse et prend ainsi le pas sur elle. La séquence logique relevée dans les Proverbes est inversée, comme en témoigne 1,26-27: "Désires-tu la sagesse? Garde les commandements. La crainte du Seigneur en effet est sagesse et instruction". Très nettement, le Siracide se place dans une théologie de la révélation où la crainte de YHWH est la source de tout et tente d'effacer toute dualité possible entre la tradition yahviste et la tradition sapientielle³⁰.

Plus difficile est le verset un peu énigmatique de Pr 4,7: *ré'shît ḥokmah q'neh ḥokmah*. Ce verset est omis dans la LXX et serait peut-être une glose explicative postérieure à la traduction grecque³¹. En donnant à *ré'shît* le sens concret de premier produit comme le suggère le vocabulaire d'acquisition (*qanah*), la signification paraît simple: le premier produit, résultat ou effet de la sagesse est d'en acquérir encore davantage et, au terme, d'acquérir l'intelligence.

Reste enfin à expliquer Pr 17,14: *pôter mayim ré'shît madôn*. Ce texte pose un double problème, syntaxique et lexical. La quasi-totalité des traductions consultées font de *ré'shît madôn* le sujet de la proposition et de *pôter mayim* le prédicat. Elles traduisent en outre *ré'shît* par un mot abstrait et temporel: "commencement" ou "commencer". Cela donne, à quelques variantes près, la traduction suivante: "Commencer une dispute c'est ouvrir une digue", l'équivalent en somme de notre proverbe "Qui sème la

²⁸ Jb 28,28 se contente d'établir une équation entre sagesse et crainte du Seigneur: "la crainte du Seigneur, c'est elle la sagesse".

²⁹ Dans la LXX le mot *kyrios* traduit le tétragramme de l'hébreu et désigne par conséquent le Dieu de la révélation. C'est l'appellation courante dans le Siracide (plus de 200 fois), le mot *theos* étant beaucoup moins fréquent (environ 25 fois) et généralement soit accolé ou en parallèle à *kyrios*, soit dans l'expression "Dieu très haut".

³⁰ On peut d'ailleurs se demander si la "stratégie" yahviste du Siracide ne rejoint pas celle, plus globale, de la Septante et, à travers elle, la stratégie interprétative des traducteurs de Pr 1,7 et Ps 111,10. Selon cette théologie, la sagesse ne pouvait être la source de la "crainte de YHWH" et devait au contraire en être la résultante.

³¹ Voir l'explication de D.-M. D'HAMONVILLE, *La Bible d'Alexandrie* 17 (Paris 2000) 182-183.

discorder récolte la tempête”. Nous n’avons relevé que deux traductions qui font de *pôter mayim* le sujet et de *ré'shît madôn* le prédicat de la proposition, à savoir la Vulgate (*qui dimittit aquam caput est iurgiorum*) et la New English Bible³²: “Stealing water starts a quarrel”. Le sens, on le voit, n’est plus le même. Aussi bien la Vulgate que la NEB paraissent plus conformes à la syntaxe du texte hébraïque. Une multitude d’adages dans le livre des Proverbes débute en effet, comme ici, par un participe présent, et celui-ci est toujours le sujet de la phrase. Il s’agirait donc ici d’un délit réel de détournement d’eau entraînant, par voie de conséquence, le déclenchement d’un procès. Une telle mise en garde ne serait pas surprenante dans le contexte d’aridité du Proche Orient. Grammaticalement plus correcte, la traduction de la Vulgate et de la NEB fait cependant difficulté dans le contexte de la tradition sapientielle d’Israël comme de l’Ancien Orient où l’un des plus grands dangers à éviter est précisément toute forme de querelle et de procès. Le livre des Proverbes à lui seul contient une vingtaine de mises en garde en ce sens³³ et le second stique de notre verset — “avant que n’éclate le procès, laisse tomber” — exprime précisément le même souci. En résumé la première traduction paraît plus fidèle à la grammaire et la seconde plus en cohérence avec le contexte proche et lointain. Mais comment réconcilier le sens et la grammaire? Les deux traductions ont en commun de donner au mot *ré'shît* le sens abstrait de “commencement” et là est sans doute la source de la difficulté. Il suffit de donner à *ré'shît* le sens concret de “premier produit” pour que toute difficulté s’évanouisse, et cela donne: “ouvrir les eaux est le “premier produit” / “la première conséquence d’une dispute”.

Le sens de premier produit est bien établi dans ces textes. Certes, dans la mesure où *ré'shît* désigne l’objet résultant d’une activité d’engendrement ou de création, la dimension de temporalité relative, et aussi d’importance ou de prééminence, n’en est évidemment pas absente, mais elle reste seconde et ne saurait en évacuer la réalité concrète de premiers produits. Il paraît vraisemblable que le sens général et profane de premier produit soit antérieur aux emplois cultuels techniques de “prémices”. Mais ceci est une hypothèse qui nécessiterait une étude linguistique plus approfondie.

³² NEB (1970), suivie par la Revised English Bible (1989) — REB.

³³ Pr 3,30; 6,14.19; 10,12; 15,18; 16,17.19.28; 18,16; 20,3; 22,10; 25,8; 26,17.20; 28,25; 29,22; 30,33. Voir aussi les *Conseils de Sagesse* babyloniens, ANET 426b; W.G. LAMBERT, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford 1960) 101; B. GEMSER, “The rib- or controversy- pattern in Hebrew Mentality”, *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (eds. M. NOTH – W. THOMAS) (Leiden 1960) 120-137.

4. Emplois métaphoriques: “premiers”, “meilleurs”, “principaux” (5)³⁴

Dans cinq autres textes le sens de *ré'shît* fluctue entre temporalité, valeur et, peut-être, produit. C'est le cas, semble-t-il de Nb 24,20, bien que son interprétation ne soit pas exempte de difficulté. Le verset est couramment traduit: “Amaleq première des nations, mais son avenir c'est la ruine”. Le texte est caractérisé par le binôme antithétique *ré'shît* - *'aḥarît* et ressemble de ce fait aux emplois temporels déjà signalés. Toutefois *ré'shît* comporte en outre, et peut-être d'abord, une nuance de primauté, de supériorité: “première des nations”. Les Amalécites, ligue de nomades dans le sud de la Cisjordanie, sont les ennemis traditionnels d'Israël au début de l'installation en Canaan. A ce titre, ils sont à la fois les premiers et les plus importants³⁵.

En Dt 33,21, Gad est dit “s'être réservé le *ré'shît* car là est la part du commandant”³⁶. Pour Driver³⁷ et la majorité des interprètes il serait fait allusion à l'attribution à Gad d'un territoire de choix, “digne d'un chef martial”, en Transjordanie, avant même l'entrée en Canaan et au fait que Gad s'est associé aux autres tribus pour l'achèvement de la conquête (Nb 32; Jos 13). Selon Seebass, ce verset serait une note davidique reconnaissant à Gad le mérite d'avoir hébergé David fuyant Absalom (2 S 17,24.27; 19,33). Quoi qu'il en soit, le terme *ré'shît* aurait ici le double sens de “première” part et de “meilleure” part. Le fait aussi qu'il s'agit d'une part “réservée” évoque l'usage cultuel du terme.

Dans l'oracle de Jérémie sur Elam (Jr 49,35) YHWH prononce cette parole: “Je vais briser l'arc d'Elam, le *ré'shît* de sa force”. La traduction généralement choisie donne au mot *ré'shît* le sens de “meilleur”. Par ailleurs l'expression rappelle les “prémices de sa virilité” en Gn 49,3 et Dt 21,17, et c'est peut-être pour cette raison que la TOB traduit “le meilleur de sa force virile”. L'accent paraît cependant porter sur la valeur plutôt que sur la priorité temporelle.

³⁴ Nb 24,20; Dt 33,21; Jr 49,35; Am 6,1; Dn 11,41.

³⁵ B.A. LEVINE, *Numbers 21-36* (AB 4A; Garden City, NY 2000) 204: “Hebrew *ré'shît* connotes the first in time, and the first in status, and this semantic range informs the interpretation of the prophecy: Amalek, an ancient nation, the first encountered by the Israelites in battle, was once powerful and numerous, but was ultimately done in”.

³⁶ S.R. DRIVER, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (ICC; Edinburgh 1951) 411; H. SEEBASS, “Die Stämmeliste von Dtn. XXXIII”, *VT* 27 (1977) 158-169, spécialement 162-164. L'auteur traduit “la part du commandant caché” et non “la part cachée/réservée du commandant”. Le “commandant caché” ne serait autre que David en fuite loin d'Absalom au-delà du Jourdain (2 S 17,24.27; 19,33).

³⁷ DRIVER, *Deuteronomy*, 410-411.

Il en va de même pour l'expression *neqûvey ré'shît haggôyim* en Am 6,1 que la masse des traducteurs, influencés sans doute par Nb 24,20, rendent par "les notables de la première des nations"³⁸. Ici aussi, quelle que soit la construction grammaticale, le registre est d'abord celui de la valeur.

En Dn 11,41 *ré'shît beney 'ammôn* est généralement compris comme désignant "l'élite", "les chefs", "la majeure partie"³⁹. Luther et la TOB font exception et retiennent le sens concret de premiers produits avec, respectivement, "Erstlinge" et "pémices". Mais, même si l'on retient ce dernier choix, le sens est probablement d'abord métaphorique.

Ces quelques usages clairement métaphoriques de *ré'shît* sont évidemment secondaires et sont limitrophes de l'une ou l'autre des trois catégories précédentes.

Au vu de l'analyse de ces cinquante occurrences de *ré'shît* le constat est clair: dans la vaste majorité des cas étudiés (40 sur 50: les catégories 2, 3 et 4) le mot désigne une réalité concrète, celle de premier produit. L'usage technique cultuel est le plus homogène et le plus fréquemment attesté (22 fois) et cela sur un large éventail de livres bibliques. Contrairement à Oswald on ne peut pas affirmer que l'usage cultuel soit spécifique de la tradition P (7 occurrences sur 22). La connotation temporelle — "premier" — attachée au mot dans ces 40 emplois ne peut, bien évidemment, en être dissociée mais elle n'y est pas l'*analogatum princeps*. Dans les 5 emplois métaphoriques le sens de primauté de valeur ou d'importance est mis en avant, mais les réalités ainsi qualifiées sont éminemment concrètes et l'idée de filiation ou de production est sous-jacente: il s'agit de villes, de nations, de personnages, de territoires. Seules font exception les 10 occurrences où la temporalité est mise en avant. Il ne s'agit pas d'une temporalité absolue comme en atteste l'état construit dans 9 cas sur 10, mais du début d'une activité de création ou d'engendrement, d'une histoire, d'un règne. En dépit du petit nombre de leurs occurrences, ces emplois temporels ont leur consistance propre et, pour certains, remontent à une tradition littéraire autonome quoique très restreinte. Il reste, et c'est la conclusion qui s'impose d'abord, que dans 40 cas, *ré'shît* désigne un objet premier produit d'une activité, et ne renvoie donc pas à un concept abstrait tel que "commencement". Le champ sémantique dans lequel s'inscrit ce terme est d'abord celui de la production et non celui de la temporalité.

³⁸ Noter cependant que quelques-uns, à la suite de la Vulgate (*optimates capita populorum*) voient en *ré'shît* une apposition à *neqûvey*. La King James est peut-être la traduction la plus précise: "who are named chief of the nations". Elle peut s'appuyer en effet sur le sens du verbe *naqab* / percer, fixer, désigner (ici au participe passif).

³⁹ La Syriacque lit *she'erîl* au lieu de *ré'shît*: "le reste des fils d'Ammôn".

5. *Genèse 1,1*

De par sa place tout au début de la rédaction de la Torah et de par sa formulation unique dans la Bible, *beré'shît* de Genèse 1,1 n'est probablement réductible à aucune traduction ni interprétation univoque. L'examen des emplois de *ré'shît* ne permet pas de conclure avec certitude à son sens précis en cet endroit éminemment stratégique. Toutefois, au terme de ce périple à travers la bible hébraïque un certain nombre de conclusions s'imposent.

Est exclue tout d'abord une signification temporelle absolue du mot *ré'shît*. En effet, les emplois du mot au sens temporel sont peu nombreux et quasiment tous à l'état construit (ou avec un suffixe personnel, ce qui revient au même) pour désigner le début d'une série, d'une destinée, d'un règne. Et c'est d'ailleurs pour cette raison que des lecteurs comme Rashi n'ont pas hésité à suggérer le rétablissement d'un état construit ("au commencement de créer ..."), inscrivant dès lors ce *ré'shît* temporel dans une durée, celle de la création. Aussi ingénieuse que soit cette correction, elle n'est cependant pas supportée par la vocalisation et l'accentuation des massorètes: d'une part *bara'* est vocalisé en *qal* et non en infinitif construit et, d'autre part, l'accent *tifha* sous *ré'shît* est disjonctif et non conjonctif comme il devrait normalement l'être si ce mot était *nomen regens*. Il convient donc, avec les massorètes et ainsi que le reconnaît encore la majorité des traductions, de traiter *ré'shît* comme un substantif à l'état absolu.

Si l'idée de commencement absolu n'est pas recevable et si l'idée de commencement relatif se heurte à la grammaire des massorètes, la solution ne peut, c'est le moins qu'on puisse dire, ignorer l'usage massif dans la Bible de *ré'shît* au sens de prémices ou de premiers produits. Avant d'y revenir il convient de rappeler la tradition rabbinique qui, s'appuyant sur Pr 8,22 où la sagesse est qualifiée de "*ré'shît* de la voie de YHWH", et sur Jr 2,3 où Israël est appelé "*ré'shît* de sa récolte", a interprété *beré'shît* de Gn 1,1 dans un sens instrumental (par, avec): c'est par la sagesse identifiée à la Torah, ou bien par Israël (en raison de son dessein sur Israël) que Dieu créa le ciel et la terre⁴⁰. L'intérêt, en ce qui nous concerne, de cette voie d'interprétation réside dans le fait que les rabbins ont compris *ré'shît* non pas dans un sens abstrait et temporel mais comme une réalité concrète. Il est évident cependant qu'il s'agit là d'une interprétation plutôt que d'une traduction.

Notre hypothèse requiert que la préposition *bé* soit traitée non comme temporelle mais comme *beth essentiae* commandant un prédicat: "en tant

⁴⁰ Voir l'adjonction de la sagesse au "commencement" dans le Targum de Babylone et dans le codex Neofiti 1 du Targum Palestinien: R. LE DÉAUT, *Targum du Pentateuque I. Genèse* (Paris 1978) 74.

que prémices”⁴¹. Sans entrer ici dans une étude plus développée de ces emplois relativement fréquents de la préposition⁴², il est remarquable que ce même chapitre de la Genèse donne deux autres exemples de cette fonction prédicative de la préposition, derrière les verbes “faire” et “créer”, aux versets 26 et 27: “Élohim dit: Faisons un adam en tant que notre image... Et Élohim créa l'adam en tant que son image”⁴³.

Il reste à savoir en quel sens les cieux et la terre sont les “prémices” de toute la création? On cherche en vain dans la Bible une reprise exacte de cette qualification. Mais les échos sont nombreux: Dieu ou YHWH est celui qui a créé le ciel et la terre, c'est-à-dire tout ce qui existe. C'est là une confession de foi monothéiste qui devient relativement fréquente à partir de l'époque exilique et post-exilique, en particulier dans le Deutéro-Isaïe, Jérémie et les psaumes⁴⁴. À ce titre le ciel et la terre lui appartiennent⁴⁵, ils tremblent et se réjouissent devant lui, proclament et chantent sa majesté⁴⁶. Le champ de la création est toujours présent et celui de la liturgie n'est jamais très éloigné, et il est vraisemblable que l'auteur-rédacteur de Gn 1 ait trouvé là son inspiration. Convergence n'est certes pas preuve, mais la vraisemblance du lien avec le culte est confortée par le caractère liturgique de Genèse 1, et en particulier par sa conclusion qui évoque l'institution du sabbat au septième jour comme acte cultuel fondamental et universel, préalable à toutes les expressions confessionnelles du culte, y compris celles d'Israël. En proclamant que tout est de Dieu, “prémices” de son acte de création, Gn 1,1 annonce par là même que tout doit lui revenir comme les prémices des récoltes dans le culte. Si, comme nous le pensons, Genèse 1,1 est un titre et non un simple élément narratif du premier chapitre, c'est un “kérygme”, une proclamation de foi qui appelle à être confessée et célébrée⁴⁷. La consécration du sabbat à la fin du récit de la création est la

⁴¹ OSWALD, “Erstlingswerk Gottes”, 418-419. Outre les exemples donnés par l'auteur (Gn 1,26; Ex 6,3; Os 9,10), plusieurs autres méritent d'être mentionnés: Gn 9,6; Ex 3,2; 18,4; Nb 18,10.26; 26,53; 34,2; 36,2; Dt 1,13; Jos 13,6.7; 19,2; 21,12; 23,4; Jg 11,35; Jr 3,19; Ez 45,1; 46,16; 47,14; Pss 12,6; 35,2; 54,6; 55,19; 118,7; 146,5.

⁴² Voir la bibliographie dans l'article de OSWALD, “Erstlingswerk Gottes”, 419 n. 10; JOÛON, *Grammaire*, 133c.

⁴³ C'est aussi la traduction de la Bible du Semeur (2000): “pour qu'ils soient notre image ... pour qu'ils soient son image”.

⁴⁴ Gn 2,4; 14,19.22; Ex 20,11; 31,17; 2 R 19,15// Is 37,16; Is 40,12; 44,24; 45,12.18; 48,13; 51,13.16; 65,17; Jr 10,12; 23,24; 32,17; 51,15; Za 12,1; Pss 89,12; 102,26; 104,2.5; 115,15; 121,2; 124,8; 134,3; 136,5; 146,6; Pr 3,19; Ne 9,6; 2 Ch 2,11.

⁴⁵ Ps 89,12; 1 Ch 29,11.

⁴⁶ Is 49,13; Pss 69,35; 96,11; 148,13; 1 Ch 16,31.

⁴⁷ Voir Cl. WESTERMANN, *Genesis I/1*, 116: “... ist die eigentliche Absicht

réponse proposée aux humains pour qu'ils rendent à Dieu ce qui lui appartient. Gn 1,1 est également le premier verset du Pentateuque et la réponse attendue à ce "kérygme" n'est autre que la Torah tout entière, c'est-à-dire toute l'histoire confessante d'Israël, laquelle acquiert de ce fait une dimension universelle.

* *

*

Au terme de ce voyage dans le sillage de *ré'shît*, il serait malvenu de gommer la lecture faite de *b're'shît* depuis plus de 2000 ans. L'idée de "commencement" ne peut de toute évidence être absente d'un mot qui fait l'ouverture de la Bible, d'autant moins qu'elle n'est pas étrangère à celle de "prémices" et qu'elle ne peut manquer, en dépit de la grammaire, de faire écho aux *b're'shît* temporels. Toutefois il faut noter que l'acception purement temporelle dans l'histoire de la traduction, outre qu'elle a prêté le flanc à des discussions sans fondement sur le thème de la *creatio ex nihilo*, ne semble pas avoir été celle des anciennes versions de la LXX et, moins encore, de la Vulgate qui ont opté pour des termes polysémiques — *ἀρχή* et *principium* — lesquels ajoutent *sotto voce* à l'idée de temporalité celle d'exemplarité fondatrice. A cette polysémie déjà inscrite dans les anciennes versions la mise en évidence de la nature concrète de *ré'shît* au sens de premiers produits et de prémices culturelles ajoute encore un autre champ de signification: celui du culte et de l'histoire d'Israël comme reconnaissance et, peut-être, poursuite de l'acte de création. Ainsi peut s'élargir, sous le regard du lecteur, l'horizon du *b're'shît* de la Genèse qui restera de toute façon un *hapax* dans la littérature biblique. Aucune traduction ne saurait en rendre toute la polysémie, il importe seulement de la laisser ouverte⁴⁸.

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des P mit seiner Fassung der Schöpfungsgeschichte gewiss nicht blosser Interpretation. Er will vielmehr darin etwas Bestimmtes von Gott, von Gottes Wirken sagen, also in irgendeinem Sinn verkündigen. Seine eigentliche Absicht ist eine assertorische, keine bloss erklärende".

⁴⁸ C'est la raison pour laquelle les traducteurs de la *La Bible Nouvelle Traduction* (BNT; Paris 2001) 32 et 2732-2733 ont opté pour "Premiers" de préférence à "prémices" afin de conserver l'ambivalence du terme *ré'shît*, à cheval sur les champs sémantiques du culte et de la temporalité.

SOMMAIRE

Prenant le relais d'une étude récente du premier mot de la Bible l'auteur développe son argumentation en faveur d'une signification concrète du mot *ré'shîl* au sens de premier produit. L'examen du vocabulaire dans la Bible le conduit à voir dans l'usage cultuel et concret de ce terme le vivier où a puisé l'auteur de Genèse 1,1 pour formuler sa confession de foi en exergue du récit de la création et en programme de Torah — Loi et Histoire — pour les humains et pour Israël.

Jonah's Sailors and Their Lot Casting: A Rhetorical-Critical Observation *

All readers are agreed that the book of Jonah is a work of high literary artistry¹. Even those approaches that do not focus on literary features cannot resist remarking on them or citing studies that have made much of them. Among these meaningful and oftentimes delightful literary aspects is the parallel or diptychal structure of the book. According to P. Tribble, Jonah lays out neatly into two scenes, each with four episodes:

Scene One (1,1-2,11)

Episode One (1,1-3)

Episode Two (1,4-6)

Episode Three (1,7-16)

Episode Four (2,1-11)

Scene Two (3,1-4,11)

Episode One (3,1-4)

Episode Two (3,5-10)

Episode Three (4,1-4 and 5)

Episode Four (4,6-11)².

There is both symmetry and asymmetry at work in this two-part, four-episode structure, but what is significant is how much the “external design” of Jonah reveals close correspondence between the book’s constituent parts³. For the purposes of the present study, we will focus on the verses

* I thank B.T. Arnold, J.K. Mead, and the Editors of *Biblica* for their comments and critique.

¹ A classic study remains J. MAGONET, *Form and Meaning*. Studies in the Literary Technique of the Book of Jonah (Sheffield ²1983). The most thorough rhetorical-critical analysis in the stylistic mode of J. Muilenburg is P. TRIBBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*. Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah (GBS; Minneapolis, MN 1994). See also her commentary “The Book of Jonah. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections”, *NIB* VII, 461-529. A recent study focusing on chap. 1 is C. LICHERT, “Par terre et par mer! Analyse rhétorique de Jonas 1”, *ETHL* 78 (2002) 5-24. In addition to a very thorough analysis, he offers a comprehensive summary of previous studies of Jonah’s rhetorical structure.

² See Appendix A in TRIBBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 237-244. Versification here and throughout follows MT.

³ See TRIBBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 111-120 on symmetry and asymmetry.

concerning the sailors (1,5-15). Tribble's analysis demonstrates that these verses (units ##5-7 in her structuring of Scene One) correspond to the verses concerning the Ninevites in 3,5-10 (units ##5-7 of Scene Two in her structure):

<i>Scene One: Chapters 1-2</i>	<i>Scene Two: Chapters 3-4</i>
5. Response to impending disaster (1,5)	5. Response to impending disaster (3,5)
– by the sailors	– by the Ninevites
– by Jonah	
6. Unnamed captain of the ship (1,6)	6. Unnamed king of Nineveh (3,6-9)
– efforts to avert disaster by action	– efforts to avert disaster by action
words to Jonah	words to the Ninevites
hope	hope
7. Sailors and Jonah (1,7-15)	7. Ninevites and God (3,10)
– sailors' proposal (1,7ab)	
– sailors' action and its result (1,7cd)	– Ninevites' action (3,10ab)
– sailors' questions (1,8)	
– Jonah's reply (1,9)	
– sailors' response (1,10)	
– sailors' question (1,11)	
– Jonah's reply (1,12)	
– sailors' action (1,13)	
– sailors' prayer (1,14)	
– sailors' action (1,15ab)	
– result: disaster averted (1,15c)	– result: disaster averted (3,10ab) ⁴

Her full treatment of the book's "external design" is found in *Rhetorical Criticism*, 107-122.

⁴ This chart is excerpted from TRIBBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 110-111 (cf. TRIBBLE, "The Book of Jonah", 475). In her overall structure, units ##5-7 comprise portions of Episodes Two and Three of Scene One, and, correspondingly, Episode Two in Scene Two. See also TRIBBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 190, with comments on how the sailor episodes "balance" the Ninevite episodes.

Tribble is not the only person to make such an observation (though she has perhaps made it most clearly and extensively), and my point here is not to challenge it, but to draw out an implication of this correspondence that seems to have gone unrecognized or un(der)developed heretofore. That implication concerns the meaning and significance of the sailors' lot casting (1,7) in light of its corresponding material in 3,10.

The casting of lots (cleromancy) is, of course, widely attested in the ancient world⁵ and is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible a number of times⁶. The precise "lots" in question appear to have varied, both within ancient Israel and outside it⁷. So, on the face of it, the sailors' casting of lots is not unusual and may even be expected in such dire circumstances⁸. However, four considerations suggest that the sailors' activity is rather unusual and, within the context of Jonah, is meant to be surprising and, literarily-speaking, delightful⁹.

⁵ Convenient overviews may be found in C. VAN DAM, *The Urim and Thummim. A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN 1997) esp. 40-44, 203-210, 215-217; F.H. CRYER, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment. A Socio-Historical Investigation* (JSOTSup 142; Sheffield 1994) esp. 276-277. See also A.M. KITZ, "The Hebrew Terminology of Lot Casting and Its Ancient Near Eastern Context", *CBQ* 62 (2000) 207-214; A. TAGGAR-COHEN, "The Casting of Lots among the Hittites in Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels", *JANES* 29 (2002) 97-103; S. IWRY, "New Evidence for Belomancy in Ancient Palestine and Phoenicia", *JAOS* 81 (1961) 27-34; and B.T. ARNOLD, "Necromancy and Cleromancy in 1 and 2 Samuel", *CBQ* 66 (2004) 199-213.

⁶ גורל ("lot") alone is mentioned some 77 times. See H.H. SCHMIDT, "גורל", *TLOT* I, 310; BDB 174; *HALOT* I, 185; C. VAN DAM, "גורל", *NIDOTTE* I, 840-842; W. DOMMERSHAUSEN, "גורל", *TDOT* II, 450-456; and J. LINDBLOM, "Lot-Casting in the Old Testament", *VT* 12 (1962) 164-178.

⁷ Cf. *NIDOTTE* I, 840: "apparently [גורל] refers to stones ... or other objects (no description exists) utilized in lot casting. For the most part there is no information with respect to the technique used. The vocabulary associated with casting lots is rather varied". Of course, there is Akkadian *pūru* (see *CAD* P, 528-29), cognate with biblical Hebrew *pūr* (Esth 3,27; 9,24.26; note also *pūrim* in Esth 9,26.28.29.31.32), which is helpful in the study of lots.

⁸ Note A.J. BRODY, "Each Man Cried Out to His God". The Specialized Religion of Canaanite and Phoenician Seafarers (HSM 58; Atlanta, GA 1998) 83-84. See further there, esp. 63-85 for sacred spaces aboard ships (including portable altars, divine figurines, and sacred standards in the stern) and religious ceremonies performed by sailors. In this regard, the study of M. MULZER, "ספינה" (Jona 1,5) '(gedeckter) Laderaum"', *BN* 104 (2000) 83-94, may be of import. He argues that ספינה refers to a particular place in the ship's cargo hold.

⁹ That is to say that the lot casting ties in with the humorous, parodic, satirical, and/or ironical part(s) of the composition. I do not wish to make any

The first consideration is that the literary setting of the story would seem to suggest that, given the severity of the storm, it would not have been either the time or place to engage in divinatory practices, even hasty ones¹⁰. The first chapter of Jonah repeatedly emphasizes that all aspects of the storm were “mighty/great” (גדולה/גדול), “tempestuous” (סער), even “dreadful/evil” (רעה) — so much so that even the ship itself thought it would break up (see 1.4.5.7.11.12.13; cf. also “raging” זעף in v. 15). Correlatively, one might well wonder if sailors would have normally used lots or had them on hand¹¹, and/or precisely what kinds of lots they would have used — especially if they did not have “standard” lots readily available¹². Then again, “lots” (גורלות) are so notoriously unspecific in the

claims about Jonah's precise generic intent (which I would argue is polyvalent at any rate), but I do believe that such literary artistry — “rhetoric” in Muilenburg's understanding of the term — often serves to delight an audience (among other things). On the latter point, cf. Cicero's famous description of the “supreme orator” as “one whose speech instructs, delights and moves the minds of his audience” (*De optimo genere oratorum*, 1.3; 5.16) — Cicero, *De inventione. De optimo genere oratorum. Topica* (LCL 386; Cambridge, MA 1949) 356-357, 366-367.

¹⁰ BRODY, “*Each Man Cried Out to His God*”, 75-77, 82, 100-101, discusses religious practices under duress at various points in his work. Unfortunately, however, virtually all of the evidence he cites is later and classical in provenience (see 77, 81), as, for example, in the case of the Greek legend preserved in Diodorus (V.58.2), which “tells how the Phoenician prince Cadmus called upon ‘Poseidon’ to protect him during several storms on his voyage from Phoenicia to Greece” (BRODY, “*Each Man Cried Out to His God*”, 82). BRODY's only Semitic textual data comes from the book of Jonah itself (82, 84) — though he also cites Ps 107,23-20 in passing (82, n. 53).

¹¹ I.e., because such means are often associated with cult/worship and therefore with cultic experts (see esp. CRYER, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, *passim*). But then again, Jonah's sailors prove to be particularly pious! For religiosity among Levantine sailors more generally, see BRODY, “*Each Man Cried Out to His God*”, esp. 73-85. He also cites Periplus of Hanno § 14, which indicates that “soothsayers” (Greek *manteis*) were taken on a particular voyage from Carthage along the coast of Africa — see K. MÜLLER, *Geographi Graeci Minores* (Paris 1882) I, 10-12. Unfortunately, no further information about these diviners or their work on board a ship is provided by Periplus — BRODY, “*Each Man Cried Out to His God*”, 84.

¹² See BRODY, “*Each Man Cried Out to His God*”, 84, who notes that “astragali, or sheep's knucklebones, were rolled like dice to determine omens One actual astragal was uncovered from the Cape Gelidonya shipwreck, and hints at attempts of the crew to determine the future fortunes of the vessel, which was eventually lost beneath the waves.” While the find is evocative, BRODY's conclusion must remain tentative. Cf. J.M. SASSON, *Jonah. A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation* (AB 24B; New

Hebrew Bible, and the practice of cleromancy so varied in the ancient Near East, that these questions are probably unanswerable.

The second consideration is that in the vast majority of instances where lots (or lot casting) are mentioned in the Old Testament, the language is used not of foreigners at all, but of Israelites. Outside of Jonah 1,7, only five other passages speak of foreigners employing the practice: Esth 3,7; 9,24; Joel 4,3; Obad 11; and Nah 3,10. All other instances concern intra-Israelite use of lots for a rather wide variety of purposes, the majority of which are connected to Yahweh (see, e.g., Josh 18,8-10; 1 Sam 10,20-24; 14,41; Prov 16,33), the cult (e.g., Lev 16,8-10; Neh 10,35), or the land of Israel itself (Num 36,2; Josh 14,1-2; 15,1)¹³. Moreover, of the five additional passages (besides Jonah) that mention foreigners casting lots, at least four reflect an intra-Israelite perspective — mentioning Israel or Yahweh in some fashion. In Esth 3,7 and 9,24 the casting of the lot determines the day of the pogrom against the Jews in Persia. However, as the story proceeds, through an amazing reversal, this date turns out to be a day of great victory for the Jews, celebrated in posterity as Purim (see Esth 9,26-32). In Joel 4,3 and Obad 11, enemies or foreigners cast lots for Yahweh's people or for Jerusalem, respectively. This leaves only Nah 3,10 as a description of the "native practice" of foreigners without reference to anything Israelite or Yahwistic. In this passage, lots are said to have been cast over the nobles of Thebes following its fall. Of course, it is an Israelite, Yahwistic prophet — Nahum — who reports this information, so that it, too, could be said to

York, NY 1990) 111, who assumes some sort of inscribed shards for the lots mentioned in Jonah 1:7 (similarly TRIBLE, "The Book of Jonah", 498), but who also notes that the Targum apparently presumed some kind of dice since they could be rolled on the ground ('*db*'). Note *TDOT* II, 450-51, more generally: "wood and stone could easily be made into lots and were accessible everywhere."

¹³ CRYER, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 277: "Clearly, there is no question of a 'secular' procedure of lot-casting here; the references to sacrifice and temple service show that casting the *gōrāl* took place under divine auspices". Although not entirely clear, it seems that Cryer's "here" refers to Jonah 1,7. Cf. more generally *TLOT* I, 311: "all usages of *gōrāl* can be describe[d] as theological"; KITZ, "The Hebrew Terminology", 214: "lot casting is generally ... conducted before deities, because the result constitutes their 'decision'"; and J. LIMBURG, *Jonah. A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY 1993) 51, who states that the sailors make "theological assumptions" in connection with the lot casting. One such assumption is that the storm is divine punishment; another is that "God communicates through the casting of lots". TRIBLE, "The Book of Jonah", 498 writes similarly: "Theologically, the use of lots to disclose the truth elevates chance to the level of divine will."

reflect an intra-Israelite and/or Yahwistic perspective. Then again the same might also be said of the narrative perspective of the book of Jonah and thus 1,7¹⁴. The point, regardless, is that in the vast majority of instances — perhaps even all instances, given the caveats above — the mention of lots and lot casting in the Old Testament reflects Israelite, not foreign practice.

Pursuant to the second consideration, it is not surprising, but nevertheless noteworthy, to raise a third — namely, that there is no cognate for biblical Hebrew גורל in the ancient Near Eastern languages, at least not with reference to the developed practices of cleromancy¹⁵. As F.H. Cryer puts it:

one notes again that there is no useful extra-Israelite etymology for the *goral*-lot from the early pre-exilic period: it seems that almost all of Israel's magical terminology, licit and 'illicit', was home-grown¹⁶.

Jonah's sailors, then, in employing divination are perhaps not unusual — even and especially when doing so in dire straits — but the fact that they are specifically said to cast lots (גורלות + נפל); an oft-attested Israelite practice, using Israelite terminology¹⁷, suggests an “Israelite” perspective

¹⁴ Any possible differences between Jonah 1,7 and the other five texts would turn, then, on its form as *prophetic narrative* as opposed to the others, which are either *non-prophetic* narrative (Esther) or prophetic/oracular *poetry* (Joel, Obadiah, Nahum). Thanks to J.K. MEAD for bringing this to my attention.

¹⁵ NIDOTTE I, 840; TDOT II, 450; TLOT I, 310; cf. HALOT I, 185: “Arb. with arrows”; and BDB 174 can list only Arabic *ḡarwal* (“pebble”), *ḡarila* (“to be stony”), and *ḡaral* (“stony ground”) as possible cognates. None of these are attested in Old/Epigraphic South Arabian — see J.C. BIELLA, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic, Sabaean Dialect* (HSS 25; Chico, CA 1982). KITZ's study (“The Hebrew Terminology”) is notably restricted to the verbs used with lots. The interpretation of גורלות as some kind of “stone” seems to come primarily, if not exclusively, from the Arabic cognate (cf. TDOT II, 450). However, the data here are equivocal: “pre-Islamic Arabs used wooden arrows without points”, so, “[i]n light of religio-historical parallels, it is ... possible that they were made of small pieces of wood” (TDOT II, 450). In short, the practice of lot casting is unclear to this day; hence, “[o]ne should possibly assume various techniques for various places, times, and contexts” (TLOT I, 310).

¹⁶ CRYER, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 277. It is worth noting that he believes the goral-lot is, in the main, a late phenomenon (276). HALOT I, 185 agrees: “mostly in late writings”. While not a definitive criterion, this is nevertheless an important observation that could be added to the discussion here.

¹⁷ Esth 3,7 and 9,24 demonstrate that use of a loanword was not impossible or out of question.

on the scene¹⁸. In this process, the sailors are being painted in Israelite garb, as it were, and are depicted as adepts in Israelite ritual practice.

The fourth and perhaps most significant consideration pertains to the structure of the book of Jonah itself. It takes its clue from the corresponding episode in Scene Two, which shows the Ninevites in full repentance (3,5-10). Despite Jonah's recalcitrance and his ultra-brief oracle — only five Hebrew words which never once mention God, never once raise the possibility of averting judgment and obtaining forgiveness, and provide no instructions whatsoever as to how the Ninevites should respond — the people of Nineveh, “from the greatest to the least” (3,5; cf. 3,6-8), repent, and they do so with panache. Even the animals don sackcloth and join in the prayer and fasting (3,7-8)! Compared to the reluctant prophet, these “pagan” Ninevites¹⁹ cannot wait to obey, are dying to repent, and know exactly what to do and how to do it, without any coaching, encouragement, or instructions from Jonah, the reluctant prophet²⁰.

The diptychal, symmetrical construction of the book of Jonah suggests that something similar may be at work in the sailors and, especially, their lot casting in 1,7. Indeed, the sailors move from each crying out to his own god (1,5a), to lot casting (1,7), to a full-blown and highly eloquent prayer to Yahweh by name (1,14). That prayer is preceded by valiant attempts to return Jonah safely to dry land (1,13), and is followed by worship (יָרָא), sacrifice (זָבַח), and vow-making (נָדָר) to Yahweh, again by name (1,16). The dense collection of pious terminology in 1,16 makes it hard to avoid the impression that the sailors are presented as converts to Yahwism²¹. Be that as it may, the sailors clearly proceed developmentally, as it were, along the following lines²²:

¹⁸ Cf. H.W. WOLFF, *Obadiah and Jonah*. A Commentary (Minneapolis, MN 1986) 114: “Narrator and readers evidently have in mind a *familiar* procedure, which they think would be applicable even on board a ship during a storm at sea”; and LIMBURG, *Jonah*, 52: “The exact procedure is not described; it would have been *familiar* to the first hearers of the story” (my emphases in both cases).

¹⁹ One might wonder if the reference to idol-worshippers in 2,9 is the prophet's own perspective on both the sailors in chapter 1 and the Ninevites in chapter 3. TRIBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 171-172, argues that the description fits neither group, which is no doubt true on the narrative level, but may not be true on the characterological level of the prophet himself.

²⁰ Cf. TRIBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 182.

²¹ Cf. WOLFF's (*Obadiah and Jonah*, 105) title to the larger unit is “The Missionary Fruits of a Flight from God”.

²² TRIBLE, too, uses the language of development for the sailors (“[t]he *developing* portrait of the sailors gives ample reasons for their conversion”) but

- (1) "Pagan" practices (1,5a-b)²³ →
- (2) a non-descript but typically Israelite divination practice:
lot casting (1,7) →
- (3) acts of Yahwistic piety:
prayer, sacrifice, and vows (1,14.16).

This development, especially the last two steps, foreshadows and prefigures — as well as corresponds to and correlates with — the later episode in 3,5-10 where the Ninevites are fully abreast of Israelite repentance strategies²⁴. That later episode, in turn, casts light on the sailors' earlier lot casting. No longer is that lot casting solely or merely something that sailors would do — especially not normally — or that makes perfect sense in the midst of a violent storm at sea, both of which may be seriously doubted. Instead, the sailors, no less than the Ninevites, are shown to be "unknowing" or "anonymous Israelites", as it were²⁵. In the one instance, the foreigners are expert in Israelite divinatory practices, which leads directly to right action and prayer (chapter 1); in the other, they are expert in Israelite penitential practices, which again leads directly to right action and prayer (chapter 3). Again, a progression can be traced:

only in order to contrast it with "the *nondeveloping* portrait of the Ninevites" (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 182; my emphases; cf. 190 on "stages" in the sailors' recognition). SASSON, *Jonah*, 111-112 speaks of the sailors changing tactics: from wanting "to force heaven to single out the guilty" (i.e., the prayers before the lot casting) to letting the lots do it for them.

²³ See TRIBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 136, for the possibility that the syntax in 1,5b "implies that the sailors try to appease the sea (a deity?) by sacrificing their wares. This interpretation resonates with the line, 'they-cried, each-man to his-god(s)'. See BRODY, "Each Man Cried Out to His God", 10-11, for a trio of storm gods (Ba'al Šamēm, Ba'al Malagē, and Ba'al Šapōn) mentioned in the treaty of Esarhaddon and Ba'al of Tyre, who were thought to cause ill-winds or violent tides and waves against ships. Cf. BRODY, "Each Man Cried Out to His God", 36 on Milqart's vanquishing of sea-monsters, and 64-72 on divine figures housed on board ships. BRODY, "Each Man Cried Out to His God", 25, does not develop the connections between Yamm and Poseidon, nor does he sufficiently discuss the possible antagonism of these gods in maritime contexts, citing only Cadmus' prayer to Poseidon during a tempest.

²⁴ For fasting with sackcloth, see esp. Neh 9,1; Dan 9,3; and 1 Macc 3,47; cf. also Matt 11,21.

²⁵ Cf. K. Rahner's notion of "anonymous Christians" — e.g. P. IMHOF — H. BIALLOWONS (eds.), *Karl Rahner in Dialogue*. Conversations and Interviews 1965-1982 (New York 1986) 207.

*(Chapter 1)**Israelite divinatory practices*

lot casting (1,7) →

*Right action and prayer*attempts to save Jonah (1,13) → prayer
(1,14) → fear, sacrifice, vows (1,16)²⁶*(Chapter 3)**Israelite penitential practices*

belief in God (3,5a) →

*Right action and prayer*fasting, sackcloth (3,5b.7-8a) → prayer
(3,8b) → repentance from evil ways
(3,8c.10a)

In this way, the sailors' lot casting can (and should) be seen as participating in the larger theological point of the book of Jonah with regard to the nations. These sailors cast lots, after all, rather than engage in other kinds of ancient Near Eastern divination²⁷.

At the same time, the correspondence of the accounts in chapter 1 and chapter 3 is not exact; there is asymmetry along with the symmetry²⁸. On the one hand, the overall length of the sailors' account (1,5-16, esp. vv. 7-15) seems expansive when set next to the report of the Ninevites (3,5-10, esp. vv. 5, 10), which seems rather compressed by comparison. On the

²⁶ The correspondence of 1,16 to the repentance of 3,8c.10a further underscores the likelihood that the sailors are portrayed as converting to Yahwism. See further R. HAUDE, "Jona – von der Überflüssigkeit des Steuermanns", *Texte & Kontexte* 26 (2003) 44-47.

²⁷ Perhaps they turn to lot casting because their prayers to their other deities are ineffectual (see 1,5a and TRIBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 136 on 1,5b). Although one cannot know for sure, perhaps these other, non-Israelite divination practices would have been referred to by some form of *נִסְפָּ*, which is a general term for divination in the Hebrew Bible, often with negative connotations (cf. *TLOT* I, 310-11; BDB 890). Whatever the case, the considerations offered above argue against TRIBLE's, "The Book of Jonah", 498 statement that "[t]he story does not report that Yahweh (or any other deity) directed the outcome of the exercise but simply that the sailors 'cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah' (v. 7c). In a setting of violence, chance alone provides the way to resolve the conflict. But the chance is caused". While the story itself may not make such a report, the rhetoric and rhetorical-structure of the book/story does suggest as much. Moreover, in the light of the arguments presented here, the lot casting is a good bit more than pure chance (cf. also Acts 1,26).

²⁸ J. JEREMIAS, "Die Sicht der Völker im Jonabuch (Jona 1 und Jona 3)", *Gott und Mensch im Dialog*. Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag (ed. M. WITTE) (BZAW 345/1-2; Berlin 2004) I, 555-567, in particular, has made a strong case for the differences between the presentation of the sailors and the Ninevites. While such differences are certainly manifest in the text, they do not invalidate the larger rhetorical-critical symmetries.

other hand, despite its brevity, the material about the Ninevites is more theologically developed and therefore clearer with regard to the particularly religious nature of the practices in question when compared with that of the sailors, which, while lengthier, is much more concise as to the specific nature of the lot casting.

Such asymmetries do not invalidate the correspondence noted by Tribble (and others) which is reinforced by the several observations provided above. Instead, the asymmetries serve to underscore the dialectic of similarity and difference that is at work in all types of repetition, including the kind of stylistic, rhetorical, and literary repetition present in Jonah (and the rhetorical criticism thereof). Symmetry and asymmetry belong together in such (literary) contexts, as do similarity and difference in virtually every instance of repetition beyond the exact or identical variety²⁹. More specifically with reference to Jonah, the asymmetry-amidst-symmetry affords interpretative insight on both the sailors in chapter 1 and the Ninevites in chapter 3. While the religiously clearer presentation of the Ninevites is the strongest piece of evidence clarifying the religious nature of the sailors' lot casting, the lengthier account of the sailors may, in turn, cast light on the otherwise limited information provided as to why the Ninevites immediately believe God (3,5)³⁰. The asymmetry-amidst-symmetry may also highlight that more is going on in the material about the sailors than just the correspondence with the Ninevites; part of that additional "more" is the rhetorical function of their lot casting³¹.

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In conclusion, these four considerations — especially the fourth and final one concerning the correspondence of the sailors' activities with that of the Ninevites within the structure of Jonah — suggests that the lot casting in 1,7 is another instance of portraying foreigners in the book of Jonah in a most positive light. "Gentiles too have religious sensibilities"³².

²⁹ For more on these points, see B.A. STRAWN, "Keep/Observe/Do – Carefully – Today! The Rhetoric of Repetition in Deuteronomy", *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller* (eds. B.A. STRAWN – N.R. BOWEN) (Winona Lake, IN 2003) 215-240, esp. 217-225.

³⁰ Cf. TRIBBLE, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 183, who believes the lack of information around 3,5 "serves artistic and theological interests."

³¹ My thanks again go to J.K. Mead for bringing this point to my attention.

³² B.P. ROBINSON, "The Compassionate God of All Nations: Intimations of Universalism in the Old Testament", *Scripture Bulletin* 30 (2000) 32.

Just as the foreigners know how to repent and fast, Israelite-style, in chapter 3, so also they know how to divine and pray, equally Israelite-style, in chapter 1. Both presentations put the reluctant prophet to shame. Moreover, the fact that the Hebrew Bible not infrequently involves religious officials, including prophetic figures in the casting of lots (see, e.g., Lev 16,8-10; Josh 14,1-2; 21:1-4; 1 Sam 10,20-24; Neh 10,35; 1 Chronicles 24-26; cf. Luke 1,9), adds yet more support to seeing in 1,7 the narrator's sympathetic presentation of the sailors but negative portrayal of Jonah³³. So it comes as no real surprise that the sailors' right(eous)ly-conducted lot casting reveals the problem person in question: the runaway prophet himself!

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SUMMARY

Several considerations suggest that the sailors' lot casting in Jonah 1 is unusual and meant to be both surprising and literarily delightful. The most important of these is the correspondence between the sailors and the Ninevites within the book's rhetorical structure. This correspondence suggests that the sailors' lot casting is a particularly Israelite practice with the sailors themselves appearing as adepts in Israelite ritual activity. That depiction corresponds to the Ninevites' ability to know precisely how to repent in chapter 3. In both cases, the foreigners are portrayed in particularly pious ways in contrast to the reluctant prophet.

³³ Cf. ARNOLD, "Necromancy and Cleromancy", esp. 207-213, on how cleromancy is used in 1 and 2 Samuel to characterize David's desire to seek God's guidance in contrast to Saul, who is "forced to rely on his own instincts and intuition such as they are" (210). ARNOLD goes on to write: "The contrast is one between legitimate Yhwh-prophecy, on the one hand, and illegitimate magical ritual on the other. Saul turns to the illegitimate use of magic as a means of seeking guidance because he has closed his eyes to the prophetic word" (211). With reference to Jonah 1 proper, see LICHTERT, "Par terre et par mer!", 23; and J. HAUSMANN, "Wer ist wahrhaft gottesfürchtig? Jona 1 und sein Beitrag zur Diskussion um das Problem Israel und die Völker", *Von Gott reden. Beiträge zur Theologie und Exegese des Alten Testaments. Festschrift für Siegfried Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag* (eds. D. VIEWEGER – E.-J. WASCHKE) (Neukirchen – Vluyn 1995) 105-116.

The Fate and Future of Zerubbabel in the Prophecy of Haggai

In the prophecy of Haggai, Zerubbabel is usually paired with Joshua (1,1.12.14; 2,2.4), but in the final oracle he is singled out for special encouragement (2,20-23). It is commonly argued that the prophet Haggai was a member of a messianic movement in Judah that was triggered by the turmoil in the Persian empire after the death of Cambyses. The argument runs that, occasioned by the political upheavals associated with the contested accession of Darius to the throne in 522 BC, Zerubbabel, who was of Davidic descent, was promoted by a partisan group as the Judean king. Zerubbabel, however, disappeared without a trace after 520 BC. According to this theory, Zerubbabel was removed from office (and maybe even executed) by the Persians due to his royal (messianic?) pretensions¹. Not every Old Testament scholar is committed to this particular theory², but it is true to say that most view the last four verses of the prophecy of Haggai as royalist in orientation³. In this article I argue

¹ E.g. P. HAUPT, "The Coronation of Zerubbabel", *JBL* 37 (1918) 209-218, esp. 209: "the nationalists hoped that Zerubbabel would rule over Judah as the legitimate king" (he believed that a coronation of Zerubbabel took place in the Spring of 519 BC); L. WATERMAN, "The Camouflaged Purge of Three Messianic Conspirators", *JNES* 13 (1954) 73-79; A.T. OLMSTEAD, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago, IL 1948) 142; J. BRIGHT, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia, PA 2000) 369-372; R. ALBERTZ, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (OTL; Louisville, KY 1994) II, 451-454; S. LEVIN, "Zerubbabel: A Riddle", *JBQ* 24 (1996) 14-17.

² According to H.W. WOLFF, *Haggai. A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN 1988) 107: "Nothing gives us sufficient reason for accusing Zerubbabel of short-sighted enthusiasm, as if he had put himself at the head of an unrealistically impetuous movement for liberty". Likewise, T. MEADOWCROFT, *Haggai* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield 2006) 201, 207, 219, sees no political challenge to Persian rule nor an expectation of a Davidic revival.

³ E.g. R.T. SIEBENECK, "The Messianism of Aggeus and Proto-Zacharias", *CBQ* 19 (1957) 312-328; M. SWEENEY, *The Twelve Prophets* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, PA 2000) II, 554-555; P.L. REDDITT, "The King in Haggai – Zechariah 1-8 and the Book of the Twelve", *Tradition in Transition. Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology* (eds. M.J. BODA – M.H. FLOYD) (LHBOTS 475; London 2008) 58-60.

that the majority view concerning the office of Zerubbabel finds no support in the passage.

1. *The structure of the oracle*

The oracle proper is prefaced by a messenger formula and date (v. 20). Zerubbabel is the recipient of an oracle (2,21-23), which is in two parts (vv. 21-22,23). A break in the oracle is indicated by the chronological formula “on that day” (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) (v. 23a). The formula is an indicator of prophetic subsections (cf. Isa 7,18.20.21.23; Zech 12,3.4.6.8.9.11), though it need not be viewed as marking redactional supplements. Simon J. DeVries views it as “an emphatic synchronizer” of the events in vv. 21-22 and the intended result of those events in v. 23⁴. P.A. Munch is probably more accurate when he says that the temporal adverbial phrase “introduces the [main] point of the oracle”⁵. The formula indicates that the coming cosmic shakeup (vv. 21-22) is the context for a significant divine promise to Zerubbabel (v. 23). The transition is also signalled by the saying formula “says the LORD of hosts” (נֹאמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) in v. 23a⁶. Verse 23 is, in fact, surrounded by the formula “says the LORD of hosts”, with a further use of “says the LORD” (נֹאמַר יְהוָה) in its middle. In the first part of the oracle, God tells Zerubbabel what he is about to do to the nations (vv. 21-22). As noted by H.W. Wolff, only the second part of the final oracle (v. 23) is specifically phrased as an address to Zerubbabel and is about him, namely, what God will do for him (v. 23)⁷.

A vital issue to be clarified is the exact relation between the two parts of the oracle. What exactly is the relation between what God says he will do to the nations and what he says he will do for Zerubbabel? There is a temporal relation between the two divine actions, for the second happens at the same time as the first (v. 23a: “on that day”), either simultaneously or in close succession. The temporal relation implies a thematic

⁴ S.J. DEVRIES, *From Old Revelation to New. A Tradition-Historical and Redactional Study of Temporal Transitions in Prophetic Prediction* (Grand Rapids, MI 1995) 213-214.

⁵ P.A. MUNCH, *The Expression “Bajjom Hahu”: Is it an Eschatological Terminus Technicus?* (ANVAO; Oslo 1936) 15 (addition mine).

⁶ B.K. WALTKE – M. O’CONNOR, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN 1990) § 40.2.3a, include נֹאמַר יְהוָה under “Nominal Exclamations” and declare that it is almost always used as “a closing formula” in the prophets, adding (n. 29) that the closure may be slight. It is better termed a separating formula (cf. Hag 1,9.13; 2,4.8.9.14.17); cf. F. BAUMGÄRTEL, “Die Formel *n’um jahwe*”, *ZAW* 73 (1961) 277-290, esp. 280-281.

⁷ WOLFF, *Haggai*, 98.

relation. Scholars regularly suggest that God destroys the earthly kingdoms in order to establish Zerubbabel's kingdom. That is not, however, the only possible relation between the two parts of the oracle.

2. *An oracle for Zerubbabel*

This is the only time in the prophecy of Haggai that Zerubbabel is singled out and a prophetic message is directed to him alone (2,21: "Speak to Zerubbabel..."). The addressees in the other oracles of Haggai are as follows: (1) Zerubbabel is paired with Joshua, and the prophetic oracle is to start with about the people (1,1-2), and then the rest of the oracle is phrased as if spoken directly to the people (1,3-11); (2) the people are addressed (without specifically differentiating their leaders) (1,13); (3) Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people are addressed (2,2-9; cf. 2,4); (4) Haggai is directed to ask "the priests" two questions (2,10-13), but the oracle to start with is about the people (2,14) and then the bulk of the oracle is phrased as if spoken to the people (2,15-19). In (1) and (2), it is specifically stated that Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people responded to the oracular message (1,12.14), so that these two oracles are understood as addressed to the two leaders and the people.

With regard to (4), the priests (and presumably Joshua as "the high priest" [1,1.12.14; 2,2.4] is included under this cultic category) and people are the recipients of the oracle (2,10-19). The involvement of the people is clear from the use of the second person plural forms in the Hebrew text in 2,15-19 and the focus on agricultural yield in these verses (cf. 1,6.10-11). This, then, is the only oracle in which Zerubbabel is not addressed (along with others) either directly or by implication. This prepares the reader for the final oracle (2,20-23), in which Zerubbabel alone is addressed. This oracle, therefore, can be understood as balancing the previous one and making up for the unprecedented omission of Zerubbabel in that oracle. This solves the puzzle of what is often viewed as the sudden mention of Zerubbabel in the final oracle of the book⁸. After 2,10-19, an oracle directed at Zerubbabel is not totally unexpected, given the pattern of addressees in the preceding oracles of Haggai.

3. *The date formula*

The final oracle of the prophecy is dated the same day as the previous oracle (2,20; cf. 2,10). The month and the year are not supplied in v. 20, so

⁸ E.g. MEADOWCROFT, *Haggai*, 200, finds the absence of Joshua in the final oracle puzzling, too.

that this date formula is dependent on what is supplied in v. 10 above (“on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius”). The (incomplete) date formula used in v. 20 indicates a close connection to the previous oracle, suggesting that this new oracle is in continuity with what precedes and is thematically complementary to it in certain ways⁹. The chronological connection is made explicit by the addition of “a second time” in v. 20, with the narrator stating that this is the second time God spoke to Haggai on that day. One of the features that links the final oracle to the wider temple theology of the prophecy is that it shares the same day as the preceding oracle, so that it is uttered on the very day that God has announced will be the day from which he will bless his people (2,18-19).

The promise of harvest blessing at the end of 2,19 (“From this day on I will bless [you]”) that immediately precedes the oracle that is the focus of my study suggests, on analogy, that 2,20-23 is an appropriate blessing for Zerubbabel. Just as the people’s willing involvement in the rebuilding of YHWH’s temple is the reason for the promised blessing (2,15b.18b), the second oracle on the same day announces God’s favour toward Zerubbabel presumably because of his role as governor in helping the temple-building project (2,21: “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah”). The fact that the oracle (like the preceding one) is dated on the day on which “the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid” (2,18)¹⁰ supports the thesis that it is Zerubbabel’s involvement in the project that explains this message of encouragement for him¹¹.

4. Election terms

The terminology used in 2,20-23 in relation to Zerubbabel (“taken, my servant, chosen”) is the terminology of election, but none of these theologically loaded terms is so specifically royal as to require that Zerubbabel is being addressed as the scion of the house of David¹². With

⁹ P.A. VERHOEF, “Notes on the Dates in the Book of Haggai”, *Text and Context. Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F.C. Fensham* (ed. W. CLAASSEN) (JSOTSS 48; Sheffield 1988) 265. For a fuller listing of features that show the affinity of 2,10-19 and 2,20-23, see M.J. BODA, *Haggai, Zechariah* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI 2004) 159-160.

¹⁰ For this expression and how it may be reconciled with the commencement of work on temple at the earlier date in 1,15a, see D.R. HILDEBRAND, “Temple Ritual: A Paradigm for Moral Holiness in Haggai II 10-19”, *VT* 39 (1989) 166-168.

¹¹ Likewise in Zechariah 4, the word of YHWH to Zerubbabel (4,6-7) and to the community about Zerubbabel (4,8-10a) both focus on him as temple-builder and give encouragement that the project will be successfully completed.

¹² W.H. ROSE, *Zemah and Zerubbabel. Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period* (JSOTSS 304; Sheffield 2000) 208-218.

regard to the final oracle of Haggai, W.H. Rose notes that it is generally taken as implying an imminent restoration of the Davidic monarchy in the person of Zerubbabel, but Rose, properly I believe, questions this interpretation, believing that the royal connotations of the key words “take” (לָקַח), “servant” (עֶבֶד) and “chosen” (בָּחַר) have been overstated¹³. The expression “to take [someone]” can indicate God’s selection of a person for high office (not necessarily royal office) (cf. Num 18,6; Josh 24,3; 2 Sam 7,8; 1 Kgs 11,37; Ps 78,70; Amos 7,15), but in each case, as pointed out by Rose, there is an indication of what office or mission is involved. But the verb “to take” can also refer to taking someone for relationship or protection (Exod 6,7; Ps 18,17; Hos 11,3), and that is what is found in Hag 2,23, where nothing is said about an office or task assigned to Zerubbabel. The designation “my servant” is applied elsewhere to Abraham, Moses, David, Israel and the LORD’s servant (Gen 26,24; Josh 1,2; 2 Sam 3,18; Isa 41,8; 42,1), so that it would be wrong to automatically associate the term “servant” with kingship¹⁴. Applied to Zerubbabel, “my servant” is an honorific title and that does not require that God has a specific task for him to fulfil. Likewise, the idea of divine choice may apply to kings, Israel and even Moses (2 Sam 6,21; Deut 7,7; Ps 106,23), so that it is congruent with a royal identity but it does not require one¹⁵.

Though each of these terms can be used in connection with kings, their biblical usage is by no means limited to that, and in and of themselves they do not prove that Haggai announces the restoration of the monarchy in the person of Zerubbabel¹⁶. Mark Boda, in referring to the argument of W.H. Rose, acknowledges that the terms taken individually are not restricted to the Davidic tradition, but says that “it is the combination of

¹³ W.H. ROSE, “Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period”, *Yahwism After the Exile*. Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Period. Papers Read at the First Meeting of the European Association for Biblical Studies Utrecht, 6-9 August 2000 (eds. R. ALBERTZ – B. BECKING) (Assen 2003) 170.

¹⁴ Cf. C.L. MEYERS – E.M. MEYERS, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8* (AB 25B; Garden City, NY 1987) 68, 70.

¹⁵ Pace W.A.M. BEUKEN, *Haggai-Sacharja 1-8*. Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der frühnachexilischen Prophetie (Assen 1967) 81, 82, who interprets בָּחַר within a Chronistic David-tradition.

¹⁶ This is also the conclusion of K.E. POMYKALA, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism*. Its History and Significance for Messianism (SBLEJL 7; Atlanta, GA 1995) 48-49. Though (on the balance of probabilities) R. MASON, “The Messiah in the Postexilic Old Testament Literature”, *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar (ed. J. DAY) (JSOTSS 270; Sheffield 1998) 341, views Zerubbabel as promised a royal status, he admits: “All the terms used could have royal connotations but, equally, none necessarily need be so interpreted”.

these terms that restricts the allusion to the David tradition”¹⁷. An impressive compilation of motifs that can have Davidic connotations (including two of the terms used in v. 23) is also found, for example, in Isa 42,1-4, but it would be a mistake to automatically assign a royal identity to the Isaianic figure of the servant of the Lord¹⁸.

5. *The signet ring*

It is regularly asserted by scholars that the metaphor of the “seal” applied to Zerubbabel (2,23: “I will make you into a seal”¹⁹) reverses the judgment pronounced on Jehoiachin in Jer 22,24-30²⁰. According to Rose, both the terminology “seal” (חֹתֶם *RSV* “signet ring”) and the details of the picture in 2,23 are wrong for a kingship interpretation of the imagery (and the same evaluation applies to Jeremiah 22)²¹. God is depicted as wearing the seal “on [his] right hand” (חֹתֶם עַל יַד יְמִינִי) in the Jeremiah text, but that is not a feature in Haggai. In neither passage is the seal taken from one person and given to another, signalling the delegating of authority (in contrast to Gen 41,42; Esth 3,10; 8,2). As stated by Rose, “the oracle [in Hag 2,23] is not about God giving Zerubbabel a seal/signet ring to put on his finger, but about God making Zerubbabel like a seal/signet ring”²². One has to conclude, says Rose, that either Haggai mishandled the imagery or the imagery was not meant to symbolise royal authority (in contrast to 1 Kgs 21,8). Seal imagery is used in the OT and the ANE to evoke the idea of

¹⁷ BODA, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 163, n. 17.

¹⁸ See G.R. GOSWELL, “*For my eyes have seen the King*”. Kingship, Human and Divine, in the Book of Isaiah with Special reference to Isaiah Chapters 36-39 (unpublished PhD Dissertation; University of Sydney 2002) 86-91.

¹⁹ As noted by WOLFF, *Haggai*, 105, the verb שָׁם with an accusative and the preposition כִּי mean “to make [someone] the equivalent of [something]”.

²⁰ E.g. K.-M. BEYSE, *Serubbabel und die Königserwartungen der Propheten Haggai und Sacharja*. Eine historische und traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung (AzTh 48; Stuttgart 1972) 56-57, sees 2,20-23 as a reinterpretation of Jer 22,24, marking Zerubbabel as YHWH’s vice-regent (*Vesir*); K. SEYBOLD, “Die Königserwartung bei den Propheten Haggai und Sacharja”, *Judaism* 28 (1972) 71, 72; G. SAUER, “Serubbabel in der Sicht Haggais und Sacharjas”, *Das ferne und nahe Wort* (FS L. ROST) (ed. F. MAAS) (Berlin 1967) 204. It does not need to be viewed as a rebuttal of Jeremiah’s prophecy — *pace* B. UFFENHEIMER “Zerubbabel [sic]: The Messianic Hope of the Returnees”, *JBQ* 24 (1996) 224.

²¹ For this paragraph, I acknowledge my substantial dependence upon ROSE, *Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 218-238.

²² ROSE, “Messianic Expectations”, 171 (addition mine).

the special care of a person who has high personal value for someone²³. Such imagery is used in a variety of contexts and is not essentially linked to kingship. Examples include love poetry (Song 8,6) and wisdom teaching (Sir 17,22). In Jer 22,24, the divine rejection of Jehoiachin is likened to the discarding of a seal (a symbol of a precious object)²⁴, and rejected Jehoiachin is described using the metaphor of a worthless potsherd (22,28: “a despised broken pot, a vessel no one cares for”). In Hag 2,23, Zerubbabel is assured that he is a seal and will be protected like a precious object. The conclusion of Rose (with which I concur) is that God’s promise to Zerubbabel comprises special protection for God’s chosen servant at a time of substantial changes on the political landscape²⁵. On this interpretation, the metaphor of the seal in Haggai’s final oracle is not a royal or messianic cipher.

6. *How temple and eschatology are related*

At the heart of the message of Haggai is the theological significance of the temple, especially the issue of the appearance of divine glory at the temple and the importance of the temple as a precursor to the end (1,8; 2,3.6-9)²⁶. The prophet depicts the inflow of the wealth of the nations to the rebuilt temple (2,7), which is a traditional prophetic theme (see Isa 45,14; 60,5-11; 61,6; 66,12), and the reference to silver and gold as belonging to YHWH relates to the same theme (2,7). “Glory” (כבוד) filled the first house (1 Kgs 8,11) and Ezek 43,5 and 44,4 contain references to the “glory of the LORD” filling the new temple. Haggai promises that the glory of the rebuilt temple will be greater than that of the earlier temple. All this will happen “in a little while”, with Haggai saying that God is “about to shake [the cosmos]” (2,6; cf. 2,21)²⁷. Eschatological events are accompanied by cosmic signs. Haggai draws on traditional eschatology (e.g. the Zion tradition in the Psalter) as do Isaiah and Ezekiel themselves.

As noted by Mason, the space devoted to eschatology in the messages of Haggai renders highly unlikely the assertion of Paul D. Hanson that the

²³ BDB, 368 understands חֶסֶם in Hag 2,23 to indicate “a precious article”.

²⁴ J.A. THOMPSON, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NIC; Grand Rapids, MI 1980) 484.

²⁵ Likewise, H. JUNKER, *Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten* (HSAT VIII 3/2; Bonn 1938) II, 106-108, views God’s message to Zerubbabel as a promise of protection.

²⁶ R. MASON, “The Prophets of the Restoration”, *Israel’s Prophetic Tradition*. Essays in Honour of Peter Ackroyd (ed. R.J. COGGINS) (Cambridge 1982) 143, 144.

²⁷ The Hiphil participle announces what God will do in the imminent future (*GKC* § 116p labels the participle a *futurum instans*).

eschatological hope evinced by Haggai was a peripheral concern and a mere device to gain support for the rebuilding of the temple²⁸. Rather, an examination of the evident and essential connection of temple and eschatology in the prophecy shows that eschatology was central to Haggai²⁹. The overall temple-focus of Haggai's eschatology, what the temple symbolises (God's palace) and anticipates (the universal reign of God)³⁰, makes it unlikely that 2,20-23 promotes messianism. If his preaching builds on Isaiah's description of world pilgrimage to Zion (Isa 2,2-4; 62,1-5; 66,18-21), it needs to be noted that none of those Isaianic passages feature a messianic intermediary. Furthermore, if Haggai's message amounts to an adoption of Ezekiel's program³¹, this rules out a full-blown Messianism, given Ezekiel's emphasis on the direct rule of YHWH and his playing down of any political role for the Davidide in his vision of the future in Ezekiel 40-48³².

7. Dual leadership

The regular pairing of the leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, that we find in Haggai (1,1.12.14; 2,2.4) is consistent with the treatment of the same two leaders in Ezra-Nehemiah. Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Joshua) are given prominence as the first two names in the list of eleven leaders in Ezra 2,2, and they are mentioned again as work gets under way in 3,2. Neither Zerubbabel nor Jeshua is given an official title in Ezra-Nehemiah³³. Zerubbabel is not identified as the governor nor is Jeshua as the high priest

²⁸ P.D. HANSON, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*. The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology (Philadelphia, PA 1979) 244-249.

²⁹ Cf. H.F. VAN ROOY, "Eschatology and Audience: The Eschatology of Haggai", *OTE* 1 (1988) 49-63.

³⁰ MEYERS – MEYERS, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 82: "The rebuilding of the temple meant the reestablishment of the kingship of God not of man".

³¹ For an evaluation, see S.S. TUELL, "Haggai-Zechariah: Prophecy after the Manner of Ezekiel", *Thematic Threads in the book of the Twelve* (eds. P.L. REDDITT – A. SCHAT) (BZAW 325; Berlin 2003) 273-291.

³² J.D. LEVENSON, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48* (Atlanta, GA 1976) 75-99; W.J. DUMBRELL, "Kingship and Temple in the Post-Exilic Period", *RTR* 37 (1978) 33-42.

³³ S. JAPHET, "Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel – Against the Background of the Historical and Religious Tendencies of Ezra-Nehemiah, I", *ZAW* 94 (1982) 68-69. However, Neh 12,10-11 give the succession of high priests (without explicitly using the title) starting with Jeshua. Certainly Eliashib was a high priest (12,10; cf. 3,1; 13,28). In Neh 12,47, the history recounted in Ezra-Nehemiah is divided into two main periods, the governorships (it is implied) of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah respectively (cf. 12,26).

(cf. Hag 1,1; 2,2 etc.), and the narratorial reluctance to give them their official titles is best explained by the author's desire to foreground the role of the entire people³⁴. In Ezra 3,1, the gathering of the people alerts us to expect a cultic occasion, and their two leaders are listed in 3,2. Over against their first mention as part of a list of leaders (cf. 2,2), each man is now given his patronym: "Jeshua the son of Jozadak" and "Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel". Exceptionally, Jeshua is named before Zerubbabel, no doubt because of the cultic nature of the task (building an altar and offering sacrifice), Jeshua being a priest (3,2: "with his fellow-priests")³⁵. Zerubbabel precedes Jeshua in Ezra 2,2, 3,8, 4,3, 5,2; Neh 7,7 and 12,1. Zerubbabel appears without Jeshua in Ezra 4,2 (as the recognised leader of the work of rebuilding) and Neh 12,47 (matching Nehemiah, another governor), and Jeshua without Zerubbabel in Neh 12,7 (a verse that only lists priests)³⁶. The point is that Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Joshua) virtually never act alone. They usually act as a pair, and in concert with the people as a whole, reflecting the tendency of Ezra-Nehemiah to downplay individual leaders in favour of group participation³⁷.

These two leaders actually play a minimal role in Ezra 5-6 when the work of building the temple recommences after the delay, for they are not mentioned again after 5,2. The names of individuals (5,2) are now replaced by the general designation "the elders of the Jews" (5,9), and we hear no more about Zerubbabel and Jeshua in chapters 5 and 6, so that these two leaders are not the ones credited with finishing the temple. As for Zerubbabel's unexplained disappearance³⁸, this is a pseudo-mystery, for the

³⁴ L.L. GRABBE, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (OT Readings; London 1998) 16.

³⁵ F.I. ANDERSEN, "Who Built the Second Temple?", *ABR* 6 (1958) 4, n. 2.

³⁶ The Jeshua mentioned in Ezra 3,9 is not Jeshua son of Jozadak but is the Jeshua listed in 2.40 along with the other Levites (as indicated by his pairing with Kadmiel in both verses).

³⁷ The comments of JAPHET, "Shesh-bazzar and Zerubbabel, I", 86 [addition mine] are pertinent: "The highlighting and centering of the public's role in the events [of Ezra 1-6], and the resultant dimming of the figures and roles of the leaders are particularly striking". See her discussion on pages 80-89. Cf. T.C. ESKENAZI, *In An Age of Prose. A Literary Approach to Ezra-Nehemiah* (SBLMS 36; Atlanta, GA 1988) 48-53; S. JAPHET, "Shesh-bazzar and Zerubbabel - Against the Background of the Historical and Religious Tendencies of Ezra-Nehemiah, II", *ZAW* 95 (1983) 220-225.

³⁸ Scholars have not been slow to provide explanations for the "disappearance" of Zerubbabel and Jeshua. See J. FLEISHMAN, "The Investigating Commission of Tattenai: The Purpose of the Investigation and its Results", *HUCA* 66 (1995) 88-90, and T.J. LEWIS, "The Mysterious Disappearance of Zerubbabel", *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients. Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*

silence of the Bible on this matter is no different in principle from its failure to tell us anything about his co-leader Joshua (Jeshua) after the second year of Darius. Both Zerubbabel and Jeshua leave the story in the second year of Darius, but there is no mystery given the tendency of Ezra-Nehemiah to downplay the role of leaders. A similar people focus is found in the prophecy of Haggai, wherein the bulk of the oracles consists of messages about the people (1,2; 2,14) or addressed to the people (1,4-11.13; 2,3-9.15-19)³⁹, and the people-focus is also the probable explanation of Haggai's silence about the subsequent career of Zerubbabel.

8. *Zerubbabel's Davidic lineage*

Haggai is silent about Zerubbabel's Davidic lineage, and it is a matter of debate how much significance the reader is meant to see in his patronym ("the son of Shealtiel") (1,1.12.14; 2,2.23). Shealtiel was the son of Jeconiah (= Jehoiachin), the deposed and exiled Judahite king (cf. 1 Chr 3,17-19). Despite the fact that 1 Chr 3,19 mentions Pedaiah (brother of Shealtiel) and not Shealtiel as the father of Zerubbabel, it is clear that Zerubbabel was a direct descendent of Jehoiachin. His patronym is also used in Ezra-Nehemiah (Ezra 3,2.8; 5,2; Neh 12,1), and it is not to be assumed without argument that this is designed to foreground a Davidic linkage, for in neither book is Zerubbabel explicitly identified as a Davidide.

It is significant that the narrator of Ezra-Nehemiah does not stress the royal lineage of Zerubbabel. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that the Davidic pedigree of Zerubbabel is ignored and concealed⁴⁰. Likewise, nothing is made of any possible Davidic connection of Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1,8.11; 5,14) if he is to be identified with Shenazzar, a son of Jehoiachin and the uncle of Zerubbabel, mentioned in 1 Chr 3,18. The identification of the names, however, is not at all likely⁴¹. The failure to provide a patronym

(eds. R.L. TROXEL – K.G. FRIEBEL – D.R. MAGARY) (Winona Lake, IN 2005) 301-314.

³⁹ Though Rex Mason draws too strong a contrast between the narrative framework and the oracles (see J. KESSLER, *The Book of Haggai*. Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud [VTS 91; Leiden 2002] 51-56), his basic point is valid: "In the oracles themselves it appears to be the community as a whole which is addressed" (R.A. MASON, "The Purpose of the 'Editorial Framework' of the Book of Haggai", *VT* 27 [1977] 416).

⁴⁰ JAPHET, "Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, I", 72. By contrast, 1 Esdras (5,5) makes much of Zerubbabel as a Davidide, see JAPHET, "Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, II", 218-229.

⁴¹ P.-R. BERGER, "Zu den Namen שֶׁשְׁבַצָּר und שְׁנַאצָּר", *ZAW* 83 (1971) 98-100, argues against the identification, and Dion added his support to Berger's argumentation that they are separate names, see P.E. DION, "שֶׁשְׁבַצָּר and שְׁנַאצָּר",

(“the son of...”) for Shesh-bazzar suggests a studied disinterest in his family connections.

The image of David in Ezra-Nehemiah requires a non-messianic reading of the book⁴². Only in Ezra 3,10 is David called “king [of Israel]”, but it is only his role as a liturgist that is in view (cf. Ezra 8,20). There is a possible allusion to the extensive kingdoms of David and Solomon in Ezra 4,20, which refers to “powerful kings” who ruled from Jerusalem over Syria-Palestine. The Davidic-Solomonic period is not mentioned in the historical view provided by the prayer of Nehemiah 9, which only has a generic reference to “our kings” in 9,32 and 34. The architectural use of the name David (Neh 12,37 – 2x; cf. Neh 3,16) and references to his liturgical role (Neh 12,45.46) and to his role as prophet (Neh 12,24.36) are found in Nehemiah 12 that mentions him by name some six times, but there is nothing that says or implies an expectation of a future Davidide who will put everything right⁴³. Within Ezra-Nehemiah, the only person ascribed as having Davidic descent is the minor character Hattush (Ezra 8,2).

We must reject the suggestion sometimes made that Nehemiah had Davidic ancestry (Nehemiah 2). The Persian monarch valued Nehemiah’s service and was loath to spare him and so asked how long he would be gone and when he would return (2,6). Consistent with this interpretation, the designation of the city of Jerusalem as “the place of my [Nehemiah’s] fathers’ tombs” (2,3) shows that the boon was made by Artaxerxes as a personal favour to a favoured servant⁴⁴. The city’s designation is no indication or hint of any connection of Nehemiah with the royal family (cf. Neh. 3,6: “the tombs of David”)⁴⁵. This is too weak a foundation on which

ZAW 95 (1983) 111-112. According to Dion, Shenazzar is derived from an Akkadian name referring to the moon god (*Sin*), but Shesh-bazzar comes from a name referring to the sun god (*Shamash*).

⁴² R. ALBERTZ, “The Thwarted Restoration”, *Yahwism after the Exile*. Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Period (eds. R. ALBERTZ – B. BECKING) (Studies in Theology and Religion 5; Winona Lake, IN 2004) 16: “The books of Ezra and Nehemiah ... wrote a history of Persian Judah as if the monarchic restoration had never been at issue” (suspension points mine).

⁴³ S. JAPHET, “Postexilic Historiography: How and Why?”, *Israel Constructs its History*. Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research (eds. A. de PURY – T. RÖMER – J.-D. MACCHI) (JSOTSS 306; Sheffield 2000) 153.

⁴⁴ As pointed out by A. HURVITZ, “בית-שולם and בית-קברות: Two Funerary Terms in Biblical Literature and their Linguistic Background”, *MAARAV* 8 (1992) 59-68, the closest biblical analogy to the expression used by Nehemiah are the words found in the mouth of Barzillai in 2 Sam 19,35-37.

⁴⁵ See the critical review of U. KELLERMANN, *Nehemia*. Quellen, Überlieferung und Geschichte (BZAW 102; Berlin 1967) by J.A. EMERTON,

to build the theory that he was a Davidide. If Nehemiah did have Davidic connections, nothing is made of them in this book. The hope for the future as portrayed in Ezra-Nehemiah does not include a Davidic ruler. So too, in the proclamation of Haggai, any explicit connection of Zerubbabel with the Davidic house is omitted.

9. *The focus on divine action*

There is a distinct focus on God's action in the final oracle, for in it God speaks about what *he* will do⁴⁶. By contrast, Zerubbabel is given no task nor is any active role ascribed to him. With respect to the anticipated divine action, God says he will "shake (רָעַשׁ) the heavens and the earth" (v. 21; cf. 2,6). In Joel 2,10 this term is used in connection with cosmic phenomena at the time of the eschatological invasion of God's army, and in Joel 3,16 "the heavens and the earth shake" due to the roaring of God. Other references in the Book of the Twelve include Amos 1,1; 9,1; Nah 1,5 and Zech 14,5, and in none of them is any human agency involved. God's threat to "overthrow" (חָפַץ) the nations recalls the divine overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen 19,25.29; Deut 29,23; Isa 13,19; Jer 20,16; 49,18; Amos 4,11; Lam 4,6). The Divine Warrior (who is given an appropriate title: "LORD of hosts") is further described as destroying the "(military) strength" (חֹזֶק) of the kingdoms. So too, the verb "destroy" (שָׁמַד) has holy war associations (e.g. Deut 2,21-22; 9,3; Amos 2,9; 9,8; Zech 12,9), and in each case it is God who is the destroyer. Specific allusion to "chariots", "riders" and "horses" that "go down" (יָרַד) recalls Exod 15,1.4.5.21, wherein the destruction of the Egyptian army is brought about by the Divine Warrior, and this victory has theocratic presuppositions (15,18). One of God's chief weapons is divinely-induced panic ("everyone by the sword of his fellow") (cf. Judg 7,22; Ezek 38,21; Zech 14,13). Nothing in vv. 21-22 suggests any military role for Zerubbabel, and he is equally passive in v. 23.

10. *The kingdom focus*

The use of the expressions "the throne of kingdoms" and "the kingdoms of the nations" suggests a special focus on royal rule in 2,22, that is, the character of the destroyed nations as kingdoms. In the closely

JTS 23 (1972) 177-181. Nehemiah 2,3 and 5 do not need to mean that the tombs of Nehemiah's ancestors were within the city, as opposed to just outside it.

⁴⁶ As also noted by P.A. VERHOEF, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NIC; Grand Rapids, MI 1987) 33, 34.

parallel verses in 2,6-7, kingdom/throne language was absent. As well, surplus words are present in v. 22, for the reference to a “throne” is not strictly needed for the expression “[I am about] to overthrow the throne of the kingdoms” to make sense, nor is the reference to “kingdoms” required in the expression “I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations”⁴⁷.

We return, now, to the matter of the relation between what God says he will do to the nations (vv. 21-22) and what he says he will do for Zerubbabel (v. 23). Despite the emphasis on royal rule in v. 22, nothing is said about giving the kingship to Zerubbabel (v. 23) nor is this a necessary inference. Japhet’s evaluation is without explicit support in the text: “...we may conclude that Haggai sees Zerubbabel as a king, whose kingdom is made possible by a change in the political structure”⁴⁸. The predicted shaking of the nations (2,7) and destruction of kingdoms (2,22) are better understood as the prelude to the establishment of the kingdom of God, not that of Zerubbabel. The fact that he is addressed as the Persian “governor of Judah” (v. 21) (as he was earlier in 1,1.14 and 2,2), suggests that his Davidic lineage is not crucial and that any royal prerogative exercised by him is beside the point. Rather, due to the valuable service that Zerubbabel as governor has rendered the temple-building program, in v. 23 he is promised God’s protection.

* *

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By way of conclusion, the following can be said. Neither the election terms used in connection with Zerubbabel nor the metaphor of the “seal”

⁴⁷ D.L. PETERSEN, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8. A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia, PA 1984) 96, notes that the expression is prolix.

⁴⁸ JAPHET, “Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, I”, 78 (suspension points mine); cf. VERHOEF, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 139: “...their seats of power are overthrown and replaced to provide the necessary room for God’s own representative” (suspension points mine); D.J.A. CLINES, “Haggai’s Temple, Constructed, Deconstructed and Reconstructed”, *Second Temple Studies 2. Temple and Community in the Persian Period* (eds. T.C. ESKENAZI – K.H. RICHARDS) (JSOTSS 175; Sheffield 1994) 78: “So the book of Haggai ends with the announcement that Zerubbabel is to be appointed world ruler”. Unless one is already committed to Clines’ deconstructionist agenda, his admission that (on his interpretation) the last four verses of the prophecy are thematically unconnected to the temple theology of the rest of the book would seem to undermine the messianic interpretation put forward by Clines.

require the assigning of a royal identity to him. The focus of the prophecy is on the dual leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, and even more than that on the willing involvement of the people in the temple-building program, making a messianic interpretation of the final oracle unlikely. Nowhere in the prophecy is Zerubbabel identified unequivocally as a Davidide. The temple orientation of the prophecy as a whole and the highlighting of divine action in the final oracle both suggest that the establishment of God's kingdom is in view, not an anticipated promotion of Zerubbabel as God's vice-regent. Instead, Zerubbabel is rewarded for his part in the temple-building project by a divine promise of protection in the context of the political shake-up associated with the dawning kingdom of God. On this understanding, the final oracle reinforces the temple-centred eschatology that lies at the heart of the prophecy of Haggai.

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SUMMARY

The final oracle of Haggai is often viewed as royalist in orientation, with the prophet promoting Zerubbabel as a royal (or even messianic) figure. This study seeks to dispute the majority view. Neither the election terms used nor the metaphor of the "seal" assign a royal identity to him. The focus is on the dual leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua. Nowhere in the prophecy is Zerubbabel identified unequivocally as a Davidide. The temple orientation and the highlighting of divine action show that the establishment of God's kingdom is in view, not the promotion of Zerubbabel as God's vice-regent.

‘Eyes to Hear’: Nehemiah 1,6 from a Pragmatics and Ritual Theory Perspective

Exegesis is the art of looking at the fine details of a text, discourse, image or any other media seeking to communicate without overlooking the larger picture¹. In this brief study we would like to pay particular attention to an enigmatic statement in Nehemiah 1,6 (וְשִׁינֶיךָ פְּתוּחוֹת לְשִׁמְעַת אֶל־הַפִּלֶּת עֲבָדֶיךָ) “and your eyes [be] open[ed] to listen to the prayer of your servant”) which is part and parcel of an important confessional prayer of the Hebrew Bible (Neh 1,5-11)². After a brief review of the history of interpretation of the phrase (or rather its lack thereof) we will try to interact with two more recent additions to the exegete’s toolbox, i.e., ritual theory and socio-cognitive linguistics, which promise helpful insights for understanding this particular phrase.

1. When Eyes are Listening: Nehemiah 1,6 in Recent Research

Most commentaries dealing with Nehemiah 1,6 pay scant or no attention to the strange combination of metaphorical language that links eyes to the verbal act of listening³. Older commentaries delight in establishing possible links to other important “thought leaders” of the literature of the HB (such as the “Chronicler” or the “Deuteronomist”)⁴ or

¹ This paper was first presented in the *Language and Linguistics* section of the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Auckland, New Zealand, on July 9, 2008. We appreciated the helpful interaction with the audience and benefited from the insightful comments of the participants of this section.

² Cf. E. TALSTRA, “The Discourse of Praying: Reading Nehemiah 1”, *Psalms and Prayers*. Papers Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study and Het Oud Testamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België, Apeldoorn August 2006 (eds. B. BECKING – E. PEELS) (Oudtestamentische Studiën 55; Leiden 2007) 219-236.

³ See also K. BALTZER, “Moses Servant of God and the Servants: Text and Tradition in the Prayer of Nehemiah (Neh 1:5–11)”, *The Future of Early Christianity*. Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester (ed. B.A. PEARSON; Minneapolis, MN 1991) 121, who writes: “The prayer of Nehemiah in Nehemiah 1 has not received a particularly warm reception among exegetes”.

⁴ J.M. MYERS, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (AB 14; Garden City, NY 1965) 95-96. Cf. F. MICHAELI, *Les Livres des Chroniques, d’Esdras et de Néhémie* (Commentaire de l’Ancien Testament 16; Paris 1967) 309. See also

choose to translate the text in a way that circumvents the strange combination and sequence of nouns and verbs⁵. Other commentaries do not comment at all on the expression⁶. One notable exception can be found in the New International Biblical Commentary which contains a brief note on Neh 1,6, stating that “prayer involved not only words but also body language”⁷. Another refreshing look at Nehemiah 1 (including also verse 6) can be found in the Berit Olam commentary series⁸. The narrative focus of this series seems to have obliged the authors to pay closer attention to the language and rhetorical strategies used in the biblical texts. Davies notes the ample use of metaphors. God is imagined as having “ears” and “eyes” (Neh 1,6.11). After having heard (שמע) of Jerusalem’s plight (Neh 1,4), Nehemiah wants YHWH to “hear” (שמע) his prayer. Williamson suggests that “it was normal to appeal to God in this way for hearing. The superficially curious juxtapositioning of ‘eyes’ and ‘hearing’ provides a fully intelligible metaphor, known also from 1 Kgs 8,52”⁹. We are wondering if this rather general statement is doing justice to the curious phraseology employed in Neh 1,6.

A.H.J. GUNNEWEG, *Nehemia* (Kommentar zum Alten Testament; Berlin 1987) 48, who suggests that the strange addition of the open eyes is the result of the work of a later editor (“Ergänzer”, p. 48) and thinks that this is typical stereotypic prayer language. Compare also I. DE CASTELBAJAC, “Les sources deutéronomistes de la figure royale de Néhémie”, *Transeuphratène* 28 (2004) 65-76.

⁵ See W. KESSLER, *Gottes Mitarbeiter am Wiederaufbau*. Die Propheten Esra und Nehemia (BAT 12/4; Stuttgart 1971) 85, who translates: “Lass doch dein Ohr aufmerken und deine Augen offen sein und höre auf das Gebet deines Knechtes ...”. The KJV, ASV, and NKJV also seem to opt for translating the infinitive construct form שָׁמַעַתָּה as a dependent relative clause, introduced by “that ...”.

⁶ D. KIDNER, *Ezra and Nehemiah*. An Introduction and Commentary (TOTC; Leicester 1979) 79; F.C. FENSHAM, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI 1982) 155; F.C. HOLMGREN, *Israel Alive Again. A Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (ITC; Grand Rapids, MI 1987) 91-92; J. BECKER, *Ezra/Nehemiah* (Neue Echter Bibel 25; Würzburg 1990) 62; M.A. THRONTVEIT, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Interpretation; Louisville, KY 1992) 64; M. BRENNEMAN, *Ezra-Nehemiah-Esther* (NAC 10; Nashville, TN 1993) 172; R.W. KLEIN, “The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah” (The New Interpreter’s Bible; Nashville, TN 1999) III, 751-754.

⁷ L.C. ALLEN – T.S. LANIAK, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (NIBC 9; Peabody, MA 2003) 92.

⁸ G.F. DAVIES, *Ezra and Nehemiah* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN 1999) 79-96.

⁹ H.G.M. WILLIAMSON, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC 16; Dallas, TX 1985) 173.

2. Ritual Theory and Nehemiah 1,6

The past twenty years have witnessed a tremendous increase in studies dealing with biblical ritual, making use of ritual theory¹⁰. This development is based on important methodological developments in the larger field of anthropology, sociology, and religious studies where the study of ritual has always played a major role. Scholars like Catherine Bell, Ron Grimes, Jonathan Smith, Mircea Eliade, Victor Turner and others¹¹ made major contributions to our theoretical understanding of ritual which in turn, also influenced the study of ritual in the area of Biblical Studies.

Current biblical research is cognizant of the different elements of ritual (be it performed or in text-form), such as required situation and context (or "trigger point/s"), structure, form and sequence, space, time, involved objects, action, participants (and their roles) and sound/language. Most biblical ritual texts do not provide sufficient data to deal adequately with all of the mentioned elements of ritual, which is often due to their abbreviated form and text nature¹² though it should be noted that even field work may

¹⁰ Compare here G.A. KLINGBEIL, *Bridging the Gap*. Ritual and Ritual Texts in the Bible (Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements 1; Winona Lake, IN 2007) 45-52; J.W. WATTS, *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus*. From Sacrifice to Scripture (Cambridge 2007); W.J. BERGEN, "Studying Ancient Israelite Ritual: Methodological Considerations", *Religion Compass* 2 (2007) 18; idem, *Reading Ritual*. Leviticus in Postmodern Culture (JSOTSS 417; London 2005); and I. GRUENWALD, *Rituals and Ritual Theory in Ancient Israel* (BRLJ 10) (Leiden 2003).

¹¹ Compare C. BELL, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York 1992); idem, *Ritual*. Perspectives and Dimensions (New York 1997); R.L. GRIMES, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Lanham 1982); idem, *Research in Ritual Studies*. A Programmatic Essay and Bibliography (ATLA Bibliography Series 14; Metuchen 1985); idem, *Ritual Criticism*. Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory (Columbia, SC 1990); J.Z. SMITH, *Imagining Religion*. From Babylon to Jonestown (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago, IL 1982); idem, *To Take Place*. Toward Theory in Ritual (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism; Chicago, IL 1987); M. ELIADE, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London 1958); idem, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York 1959); idem, *The Quest*. History and Meaning in Religion (Chicago, IL 1969); V.W. TURNER, *The Drums of Affliction*. A Study of Religious Processes among the Ndembu of Zambia (Oxford 1968); and idem, *The Ritual Process*. Structure and Anti-Structure (Harmondsworth 1969).

¹² Compare KLINGBEIL, *Bridging the Gap*, 130-131; see also G.A. KLINGBEIL, "Altars, Ritual and Theology — Preliminary Thoughts on the Importance of Cult and Ritual for a Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures", *VT* 54 (2004) 495-515.

not provide all the relevant data. In the following we will ask Neh 1,6 some of the questions that ritual theory is raising.

What triggers Nehemiah's prayer (which should be considered a ritual act) in Neh 1,5–11? Clearly, the news received by Hanani (1,2), a fellow Jew who had recently traveled with some companions from Jerusalem to the Persian capital Susa, describing the sad state of affairs in Jerusalem, triggered a strong ritual response by Nehemiah, highlighting the fact that ritual is often a recourse in crisis and a response when people feel overwhelmed by a crisis. It is interesting to note that while the main concerns regarding Jerusalem involved the broken walls and burnt gates of the city (Neh 1,3) and seemingly had no direct bearing on religious matters (such as temple worship, sacrificial procedures, priestly order, etc.), Nehemiah's reaction is couched in religious garb and represents a ritualized response¹³. Upon hearing this news report, Nehemiah sits down and weeps and for several days he mourns, which involved fasting and praying. The emotive response of sitting down (יָשָׁב) and weeping (בָּכָה) appears regularly in the Hebrew Bible in response to bad news or lack of hope. Hagar and Ishmael are expelled from Abraham's camp and wander about in the desert. When they cannot find any water Hagar moves away from Ishmael and sits down and weeps (Gen 21,16). Similarly, a female prisoner of war that married an Israelite had to stay (lit. "sit") in the house for a full month and cry for her father and mother (Deut 21,13)¹⁴, while the tribes of Israel (except Benjamin) sit and weep over the horrific crime that the Benjamites from Gibeah had committed (Judg 20,26)¹⁵.

This ritualized response seems to have served at least two purposes: first, it functions as a public signal that something was terribly wrong and

¹³ Ritualization is an important strategy of constructing new power relationships and dealing with new (and often disturbing) situations where no set ritual is available. Compare here BELL, *Ritual*, 77-83 and J. BRUMBERG-KRAUS, "'Not by Bread Alone...': The Ritualization of Food and Table Talk in the Passover Seder and in the Last Supper", *Semeia* 86 (1999) 165-191. Compare also the helpful comments in F.H. GORMAN JR., "Ritualizing, Rite and Pentateuchal Theology", *Prophets and Paradigms. Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker* (ed. S.B. REID) (JSOTSS 229; Sheffield 1996) 173-186.

¹⁴ Compare here the insightful comments found in C.H. GORDON, "Father's Sons and Mother's Daughters in Ugaritic, in the Ancient Near East and in Mandaic Magic Texts", *Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf*". Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient (FS Oswald Loretz) (eds. M. DIETRICH – I. KOTTSIEPER – H. SCHAUDIG) (AOAT 250) (Münster 1998) 319-324, and earlier J.P. WEINBERG, "Das beit 'abot im 6-4 Jh v u z", *VT* 23 (1973) 400-411.

¹⁵ Other references from the Hebrew Bible containing the combination of sitting (יָשָׁב) and weeping (בָּכָה) can be found in Judg 21,2; 2 Kgs 22,19; 2 Chr 34,27; Ps 137,1; Isa 30,19; and Ezek 8,14.

by being a signal, it did not require further language— even somebody who could not communicate directly with Nehemiah would see that he was in mourning. Second, since it is a conventional response, it provides an anchor in a turbulent and difficult moment. Third, sitting and weeping prepares for action. It is interesting to note that Neh 1,4 already describes the activity using participles, which seem to denote here continuous action. “Fasting” and “praying” are to be done when one is sitting and weeping and mourning. While the first is a “non-action” (or, perhaps better, a negative action), i.e., the lack of eating, which marks mourning rites in the ANE and Israel¹⁶, the second involves specific action and — more importantly — words¹⁷. Prayer can be part and parcel of cyclical (or calendarical) rituals (e.g., prayers during specific processions or feasts), but in the specific context of Neh 1 it is triggered by a specific need. In this sense, Nehemiah’s prayer stands outside the regular cycle of ritual action of a Jew living in the Diaspora, a characteristic shared by other rituals often associated with special feasts, which move their participants from the known of daily life to the unknown, which is outside of the regular life experience¹⁸.

The biblical text does not provide specific information about time and place of this “reactive” prayer. The only time reference in 1,4 is יָמִים; “days”

¹⁶ Compare X.H. THI PHAM, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSS 302; Sheffield 1999) and G.A. ANDERSON, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance. The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, PA 1991); S.M. OLYAN, “The Biblical Prohibition of the Mourning Rites of Shaving and Laceration: Several Proposals”, *A Wise and Discerning Mind*. Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long (eds. S.M. OLYAN – R.C. CULLEY (BJS 325; Providence, RI 2000) 181-189.

¹⁷ For prayer in Nehemiah or other motifs that are relevant in the context of Nehemiah’s prayer, see TALSTRA, “The Discourse of Praying”, 219-236; W. GROSS, “Bedrohliche Gottesnähe als Gebetsmotiv”, *Gottes Nähe im Alten Testament* (eds. G. EBERHARDT – K. LIESS) (SBS 202; Stuttgart 2004) 65-83; J.H. NEWMAN, “Nehemiah 9 and the Scripturalization of Prayer in the Second Temple Period”, *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition* (eds. C.A. EVANS – J.A. SANDERS) (JSNTSS 154. Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 6; Sheffield 1998) 112-123; and M.J. BODA, “Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9”, *TynBul* 48 (1997) 179-182. On the “Handerhebungsgebete” in cuneiform texts and the importance of action in the performance of prayer cf. A. ZGOLL, *Die Kunst des Betens. Form und Funktion, Theologie und Psychagogik in babylonisch-assyrischen Handerhebungsgebeten an Ištar* (AOAT 308; Münster 2003).

¹⁸ See the discussion in B. JANOWSKI – E. ZENGER, “Jenseits des Alltags: Fest und Opfer als religiöse Kontrapunkte zur Alltagswelt im alten Israel”, *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 18 (2003) 63-102.

which is indefinite, but suggests a longer time frame. In terms of ritual space it is important to note that the fasting and praying is happening הַשָּׁמַיִם לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵי “before the God of Heaven”, a phrase which is well known in the postexilic texts from Elephantine¹⁹. Many ritual texts (often, though not exclusively, involving sacrifices) use the phrase לִפְנֵי יְהוָה “before YHWH” as a technical term marking ritual space associated with the tabernacle/temple (e.g., Lev 1,3.5.11; 3,1.7.12; 4,4.6.7.15.17.18.24; 5,26; 6,7.18; 7,30; etc.)²⁰. Since postexilic authors show a preference for the phrase “God of heaven”²¹ it can be argued that “before YHWH” and “before the God of heaven” is somewhat synonymous and highlights the importance of location and relation. Clearly, Nehemiah is not “before the God of heaven” in the sense of geography. He is sitting and praying in Susa and there is no indication that he is fasting and praying in a separate ritual space. But, “before the God of heaven” indicates a dependence and relationship to the God to whom the prayer is directed.

Ritual language is one of the most difficult to ascertain elements of biblical ritual, since the texts do not always indicate specific formulas or words that are mentioned. Prayer is one of the exceptions to this rule and Neh 1,5-11 provides a good example of a penitentiary prayer appearing as part of a ritual response to a crisis. Understood in this manner, it becomes clear that the eyes of God which should be open to “hear” the prayer point to the fact that prayer in ancient Israel (as well as in the larger cultural and religious universe of the ANE) did not only involve words (so important to our western idea of communication) but also action and that it was the complete package that Nehemiah presented to the God of heaven.

3. Socio-Linguistic Pragmatics and Nehemiah 1,6

In traditional biblical studies it has been customary to focus attention almost exclusively on semantics in the exegetical enterprise. But as is easily observable (as in the case of Neh 1,6), an exclusively semantic study does not always provide a complete reading. In order to understand the biblical communication appropriately we need to go beyond the simple meaning of words. The linguistic subfield of pragmatics may provide some help in achieving a more rounded reading²². While semantics deal with the

¹⁹ See for further references WILLIAMSON, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 12.

²⁰ If one “stands” before YHWH it generally points to serving YHWH (Deut 29,14; Jer 35,19; Zech 3,1; etc.) and ancient translators and scribes were well aware of this concept as the *tiqqun sopherim* in Gen 18,22 shows.

²¹ The phrase occurs eight times in Ezra (Ezra 1,2; 5,11.12; 6,9.10; 7,12.21.23) and four times in Nehemiah (Neh 1,4.5; 2,4.20).

²² C.W. MORRIS, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (Chicago, IL 1938) 30, defined pragmatics as the “science of the relation of signs to their interpreters”.

actual language use, pragmatics deal with the accompanying circumstances. It involves "a speaker-hearer's tacit knowledge of the conditions governing the appropriate use of language"²³. In the following section we would like to take Ferrara's definition of pragmatics as our starting point. Ferrara defines socio-linguistic pragmatics as the "systematic study of the relations between the linguistic properties of utterances and their properties as social action"²⁴. In other words, rather than asking what does the phrase "eyes to hear" means we need to ask what did the speaker/writer wish to communicate by using this strange phrase.

Probably the first question that needs to be addressed is whether or not this is a legitimate communication attempt. In answer to this question we have four basic options. Either, this obviously strange expression is a scribal error, or Nehemiah was unaware of what he was doing²⁵ that is to

For the use of pragmatics in biblical studies see C. HARDMEIER, "Die textpragmatische Kohärenz der Tora-Rede (Dtn 13) im narrativen Rahmen des Deuteronomiums: Texte als Artefakte der Kommunikation und Gegenstände der Wissenschaft", *Was ist ein Text? Alttestamentliche, ägyptologische und altorientalische Perspektiven* (eds. L.D. MORENZ – S. SCHORCH) (BZAW 362; Berlin 2007) 207-257; F.H. POLAK, "Sociolinguistics and the Judean Speech Community in the Achaemenid Empire", *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (eds. O. LIPSCHITS – M. OEMING) (Winona Lake, MN 2006) 589-628; W.M. SCHNIEDEWIND, "Prolegomena for the Sociolinguistics of Classical Hebrew", *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 5 (2004) n.p. [cited 30 June 2008]. Online: http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article_36.pdf; N. WINTHER-NIELSEN, "Fact, Fiction, and Language Use: Can Modern Pragmatics Improve on Halpern's Case for History in Judges?," *Windows Into Old Testament History. Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of "Biblical Israel"* (eds. V.P. LONG – D.W. BAKER – G.J. WENHAM) (Grand Rapids, MI 2002) 44-81; A.L.H.M. VAN WIERINGEN, "The Reader in Genesis 22:119. Textsyntax - Textsemantics - Textpragmatics", *EstBib* 53 (1995) 289-304; H. SIMIANYOFRE, "Pragmalingüística: comunicación y exégesis", *RevistB* 50.23 (1988) 75-95; E.R. HOPE, "Pragmatics, Exegesis, and Translation", *Issues in Bible Translation* (ed. P.C. STINE) (United Bible Societies Monograph Series 3; London 1988) 113-128; and earlier in a pioneering effort C. HARDMEIER, *Texttheorie und biblische Exegese. Zur rhetorischen Funktion der Trauermetaphorik in der Prophetie* (Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 79; München 1978).

²³ R.P. BOTHA, *The World of Language. A Carrollinian Canvas* (Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics 29; Stellenbosch 1995) 125.

²⁴ A. FERRARA, *Pragmatics. Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (London 1985) II, 138.

²⁵ Regarding the issue of the authorship of Nehemiah see K.-J. MIN, *The Levitical Authorship of Ezra-Nehemiah* (JSOTSS 409; London 2004), and the introductory section of the standard commentaries.

say, he was socially and pragmatically incompetent. Another option would be that this was an accepted linguistic form or expression and the problem of interpretation would thus be bound to linguistic conventions unknown to the modern reader, or, finally, Nehemiah could be deliberately using this expression to enhance his communicative attempt.

Let us begin with the first option, namely, that this was a scribal error. While it is not uncommon for native speakers to get “tongue-tied”, it is rare for this to occur in a written official document, especially by one whose author claims to be a highly educated person. When a jarringly strange expression occurs within oral conversation, the speaker or the hearer normally draws attention to this and it is quickly corrected or clarified by the speaker. In this written form it is remarkable that such a supposed error would go unedited for so many millennia, when there are other examples of scribal corrections on less glaring errors or incongruences²⁶. For example the phrase “YHWH remained standing before Abraham” in Gen 18,22 was quickly altered/corrected in transmission on theological grounds, after all, how could God remain standing before a man, attending or being of service to a human being?²⁷

What about the second option, namely, that the author was unaware that his choice of words would be a potential interpretative problem to the hearer or reader? Studies in child discourse have shown that the “social rules of language use are acquired together with the formal properties of language already in early childhood”²⁸. These studies suggest that “certain aspects of the communicative properties of languages may be culture- and language-specific”²⁹. In other words, the interpretative problem could lie with the modern reader. We, as the readers separated by time and language from the original text and its co-text, could be experiencing sociopragmatic failure. Sociopragmatic failure “stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour”³⁰. It could be possible that within the linguistic conventions of Hebrew spoken at the

²⁶ Neither BHS nor BHQ note any problem in the particular phrase under discussion. There is, however, a variant involving the spelling of the anomalous form of פָּרָעַחַת which does not have a bearing on the current issue.

²⁷ Compare the careful discussion of the text in M. PRÖBSTLE, “YHWH Standing Before Abraham: Genesis 18:22 and Its Theological Force”, *Inicios, fundamentos y paradigmas. Estudios teológicos y exegéticos en el Pentateuco* (ed. G.A. KLINGBEIL) (Libertador San Martín 2004) 169-189.

²⁸ S. BLUM-KULKA, “Learning to Say What you Mean in a Second Language: A Study of the Speech Act Performance of Learners of Hebrew as a Second Language”, *Applied Linguistics* 3 (1982) 29.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁰ J. THOMAS, “Cross-cultural Pragmatic Failure”, *Applied Linguistics* 4 (1983) 99.

time of Nehemiah this was a perfectly normal form of address, perhaps a special convention to use in prayer. In a literal translation one “may sometimes encounter formulaic phrases which function as conventionalized expressions”³¹, which only appear strange when literally translated into a different language and cultural environment. Of course, we have the added distance of time to also contend with. Although this possibility cannot be completely discarded, the absence of the use of this phrase in other biblical or extra-biblical examples of prayer suggests that this cannot have been a well-known and often used linguistic convention.

We have to a large degree discounted the first three options and must now look at the fourth option, namely that Nehemiah is deliberately making use of an unusual expression in a particular communicative attempt. A deliberate flaunting of linguistic conventions is always done for a reason. Often this is done with the intention of deceiving or misleading³². However, in this case the speaker does not seem to have any intention of misleading the hearer/audience but rather wishes to “prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning”³³. Unusual semantic features are often used as relationship markers which indicate or reinforce relationship and/or social distance and status. Perhaps some of the strangest terminology is used as terms of endearment, as can be seen in a parent calling a child “my little sausage”. However, our unusual semantic feature in Nehemiah does not seem to be a term of endearment, although it is part of an invocation to God.

Language is the medium or at least an important player in the formation of experience. Unusual semantic use can be a call to a shared memory or event of the past. This forms, what can be termed, relational memory triggers³⁴. We all have our own personal pragmatic dictionary or lexicon, acquired in childhood together with language properties, which helps us to compare the context of one situation with another³⁵. Many communicative strategies are attempts to call upon the hearer’s pragmatic dictionary or are intended to convince the hearer that the current situation is similar to one the speaker assumes the hearer has experienced in the past

³¹ G. KASPER, “Pragmatic Transfer”, *Second Language Research* 8 (1992) 215.

³² THOMAS, “Cross-cultural Pragmatic Failure”, 65.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ In biblical studies these “textual” triggers and allusions have often been described under the category of intertextuality.

³⁵ For a more detailed discussion of this issue see C.J. KLINGBEIL, “Mirando más allá de las palabras — pragmática lingüística y su aplicación a los estudios bíblicos”, *Entender la Palabra. Hermenéutica adventista para el nuevo siglo* (eds. M. ALOMÍA et al.) (Cochabamba 2000) 123-135.

and that a similar course of action needs to be undertaken. In recent North American politics a statement that “Iraq is another Vietnam” would evoke many responses. Most Americans would immediately understand the speaker to be saying that US involvement in the Iraq war is the same as or similar to the US experience in the Vietnam war.

Nehemiah could well be attempting to evoke such a memory trigger by his use of the “eyes to hear” phrase. First of all, he would be trying to evoke it in his communication with God whom he is addressing and, secondarily, his audience of later potential readers. The specific context is one of destruction and desolation — at least this is how Nehemiah perceives the situation in Jerusalem to be from the reports that he has just received. Even though there are no clear semantic links, it seems that for Nehemiah the context is similar to the one described in Gen 1,2, perhaps as “without form and void” as the earth was. This is an event that Nehemiah is sure God remembers, God saw the void, God acted and creation took place. After each creation day God saw everything and it was good³⁶. Nehemiah is asking God to see the situation now, see that it is not good but rather similar to the *תהו ובהו* “without form and being void (i.e., chaotic)” before creation. He is asking God to reassert his creative power within the current context.

For a Jewish reader this contextual association would not seem stretched. All history began for the Jewish reader with the creation account of God bringing order from chaos. The formation of the Jewish nation itself was seen as a divine creative act by God. The becoming of a nation in Exod 1, the plague narrative in Exod 7–12, as well as the “creation” of the sanctuary (Exod 25–40) are all couched in creation language³⁷. The reader is now also invited to see how God will act. By means of the “eyes to hear” phrase, the reader has been sensitized to the “seeing motif” that appears repeatedly in the next two chapters. The action that follows in the narrative can quickly be seen. For, after asking God to see, Nehemiah’s prayer is

³⁶ See Gen 1,4.10.12.18.21.25.31. The divine act of seeing and considering it good is closely linked to his creative power. As stated by C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis* (Minneapolis, MN 1994) III, 113, “such recognition (i.e., seeing) belongs to the very process of creation”.

³⁷ Compare here W.H. SCHMIDT, “Eine Querverbindung — jahwistische Urgeschichte und Plagenerzählungen”, *Auf dem Weg zur Endgestalt von Genesis bis II Regum* (FS Hans-Christoph Schmitt) (eds. M. BECK – U. SCHORN) (BZAW 370; Berlin 2006) 35–40; B. JANOWSKI, “Der Himmel auf Erden. Zur kosmologischen Bedeutung des Tempels in der Umwelt Israels”, *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalischen Kontexte* (eds. B. JANOWSKI – B. EGO; FAT 32; Tübingen 2001) 229–260, and earlier B. JANOWSKI, “Tempel und Schöpfung”, *JBTh* 5 (1990) 37–69.

quickly answered by the king seeing the needs of his cupbearer in Neh 2,2. At first this seeing is not a positive one as it is breaking the social norms of behavior before the king. It is interesting to note the special inserted commentary by the author of Nehemiah to explain to the reader some of the socio-linguistic rules of what is acceptable to say and/or do, including the type of body language appropriate for someone in Nehemiah's social position to display before the king. This serves to highlight the potential gravity and danger of the situation for Nehemiah.

The seeing-chain of events continues. Nehemiah wanted God to see the situation in Jerusalem and do something positive. Now the king has seen Nehemiah in a potentially negative way. After a second quick intercessory prayer things begin to turn around. Nehemiah is granted favor in the king's sight (Neh 2,6) and, even more, he is sent back with military protection and needed building supplies in order to supervise the rebuilding effort³⁸.

Nehemiah must still see and hear further threats and challenges to the rebuilding project. But it soon becomes obvious to the reader that Nehemiah's prayer was both seen and heard and that a new miracle of creation or bringing order from chaos has taken place with the rebuilding of the walls against all odds and within record time³⁹.

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In this study we have looked beyond traditional exegetical tools, opting to use ritual studies and linguistic pragmatics in order to examine both the fine details, as well as the larger picture the of the strange statement in Neh 1,6 and provide new avenues of interpretation that could help the reader gain a better understanding of this verse.

In the ritual studies section we examined the phrase within the context of the confessional prayer genre of the Hebrew Bible (Neh 1,5-11). We began by identifying and exploring the trigger or context for this ritual and then went on to understand the important ritual elements of time, space, action, and language embedded within the larger context of the phrase. We suggested that this penitentiary prayer is part of a ritual response to a crisis. Viewed as such it becomes clear that prayer in ancient Israel (as well as in

³⁸ Despite this Nehemiah is granted favor in the king's sight in v.5 and he is sent along with the needed material. Nehemiah then goes out to see for himself the destruction of the walls.

³⁹ The impossible task was undertaken and the wall completed in 52 days (6,15).

the larger ANE) did not only involve words but also action and that it was the complete package that Nehemiah presented to the God of heaven.

Within the linguistic pragmatic reading of the phrase we explored its communicative intention and perspective. After discounting the possibility of a scribal error, social or pragmatic incompetence, or otherwise unknown linguistic conventions we suggested that it was (most likely) a deliberate flaunting of a linguistic convention in order to enhance the author's/writer's communicative attempt.

The disciplines of ritual theory and socio-pragmatic linguistics share many overlapping areas, such as context, triggers, the importance of language per se, and its communicative force. These were used as lenses through which the text may further be explored within the theoretical frameworks of the distinct subdisciplines. This study has hopefully illustrated the usefulness of interdisciplinary studies in the reading of difficult or unusual texts. Interdisciplinary studies help the reader gain insight (i.e., "eyes") from different disciplines "to hear" more creative readings of the biblical texts.

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SUMMARY

This study of the enigmatic phrase וְעֵינֶיךָ פְּתוּחוֹת לְשִׁמְעַת אֶל־תְּפִלַּת עַבְדְּךָ "and your eyes open to listen to the prayer of your servant" (Neh 1,6) utilizes an interdisciplinary approach involving insights from linguistic pragmatics and ritual theory. We will begin with a brief review of the history of interpretation of this phrase. Particular attention will then be given to elements of ritual theory, such as trigger point, ritual language, time, place, sequence, etc. Finally, we will examine the pragmatic context, discourse, and conversational strategies involved with this phrase.

The Crux at Hebrews 2,9 in Its Context

The present note will propose a solution involving the purpose clause at Heb 2,9 introduced by ὅπως (ὅπως χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσεται θανάτου) and then, on the basis of this proposed solution, suggest a re-reading of Heb 2,8b-14.

I. The Classic Crux at Hebrews 2,9

The normal force of the word ὅπως is final, i.e., it expresses the purpose for which something happens. Thus, following the normal meaning of ὅπως, the text seems to say that Jesus suffered death in order to die. One reaction is to state that the force of the ὅπως is not clear and to let it go at that¹. Another reaction is to rearrange the text so that the apparent anomaly of Jesus dying in order to die is removed². Still another reaction is to interpret ὅπως in a modal sense so that the verse is to be understood as follows: "...all this (the humiliation and the resurrection) took place in order that, by the favor of God, Jesus might experience death on behalf of everyone". That is to say, the ὅπως clause makes the resurrection the vehicle for applying the expiatory death of Christ to all mankind. The difficulty with this view is that a modal meaning for ὅπως

¹ P. ELLINGWORTH, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGCT; Grand Rapids, MI – Carlisle, England 1993) 155.

² The reaction of one commentator is as follows. Translation of Heb 2,9: "But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and splendor" (W.L. LANE, *Hebrews 1-8* (WBC 47A; Dallas, TX 1991) 42. Explanation of translation: "The translation seeks to reflect the sense intended by the writer rather than the order of the clauses in v. 9. It is imperative to recognize that in the Gk text the clauses have been arranged in a chiasmic fashion so that the first clause ('who for a little while was made lower than the angels') is complemented by the fourth ('so that that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone'). This literary arrangement served to bring together the two inner clauses ('because of the suffering of death' and 'crowned with glory and splendor'). Only by rearranging the order of the clauses in the translation can the intended sense be expressed" (LANE, *Hebrews*, 43). But this is hardly the way to do exegesis: decide the sense intended by the author and then rearrange the text accordingly.

is found nowhere else³. Further, it fails to exploit fully the particular and general context of Heb 2,9⁴.

The general context of Heb 2,9 may be stated as follows:

- 1,1-4: exordium to the entire epistle and introduction to what immediately follows;
- 1,5-14: an exposition on Jesus as son [of God];
 - 2,1-4 *paraklêsis* based on the preceding exposition;
- 2,5-18: an exposition on Jesus as son of man;
 - 3,1-6 *paraklêsis* based on the preceding exposition⁵.

The entire passage 2,5-18 is dominated by the theme of the faith-trust of Jesus, enunciated at 2,13a. With regard to 2,8b-12 this faith-trust is about the risen Jesus, i.e., his faith-trust has been vindicated; with regard to 2,13b-18 this faith-trust is about Jesus in the face of death, i.e., before his resurrection. 2,13b-18 is about Jesus the earthly high priest; 2,8b-12 is about the heavenly high priest. The earthly high priesthood of Jesus is in function of his coming “sharing blood and flesh”, i.e., taking on an earthly body; his heavenly high priesthood is in function of his resurrection, i.e., his being given a heavenly body. At 2,12 there is an allusion to the Christian *tôdâ* — the heavenly high priest presides at this the memorial of his earthly bloody sacrifice. This is structural background against which the crux at Heb 2,9 would seem to find a solution.

A first indication of the way to a solution of the crux is found in the use of the word βλέπω, which in Hebrews occurs in contexts involving faith⁶. That is, the gazing on Jesus involves faith in what is “gazed on”. The object of what is being gazed on with faith in 2,9 is Jesus crowned with glory and honor, i.e., the risen Jesus. Inasmuch as the author and his addressees may be presumed to belong to the generation following those who knew Jesus at first-hand (cf. Heb 2,3), the presumption is that this “gazing” on Jesus is on the risen Jesus perceived with the eyes of faith. The

³ The matter is discussed in ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 155.

⁴ The present writer is in full agreement with this last view insofar as it makes the glorification/resurrection of Jesus essential for the relevance of the death of Jesus to all mankind. But he prefers to take a liturgical approach as regards the means of making the death relevant to Christians, an approach which depends on the ontological change in Jesus’ body undergone at the moment of the resurrection. This liturgical approach is based on the allusion to the *tôdâ* prayer of Ps 22 cited at Heb 2,12. Cf. J. SWETNAM, “ὁ ἀπόστολος in Hebrews 3,1”, *Bib* 89 (2008) 254-257.

⁵ J. SWETNAM, “The Structure of Hebrews: a Fresh Look”, *Melita Theologica* 41 (1990) 27.

⁶ ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 154. Cf.: Heb 10,25; 11,1.3.7. Even in 3,19 βλέπω is found in a context involving faith.

gazing involves the belief that his risen state was achieved precisely because of his suffering death, which in turn is related to his “tasting” death for each and everyone. And the gazing would seem to imply a certain immediacy⁷. It clearly implies a strong subjective experience. And the whole purpose of this faith-based subjective experience is to become aware that Jesus suffered death precisely to “taste” death for each and everyone, that is, “experience” death.

The vivid faith-based experience of the Christians is directed to the vivid, faith-based experience of Jesus⁸. The death of Jesus is presented as having taken place in order that the faith-based way in which he experienced death might be placed before the faith-based gaze of the Christians⁹. And the purpose of this is given at Heb 2,15: to free the descendants of Abraham from the fear of death¹⁰. Heb 2,9 states that Jesus went through the process of death-resurrection precisely for the purpose (ὅπως) of dying in the faith-based gaze of each person¹¹. That is to say, Jesus died so that in his risen state he might go through the whole process of dying (“tasting death”) in the gaze of each person who has faith-trust in Abraham and in him¹² so that they might be freed from the fear of death¹³. The entire process of “tasting death” results in Jesus being raised from the dead — βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν ... δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον. It is the resurrection that gives the ultimate vindication to Jesus’ faith-trust following his being “tested” as they are being tested (cf. Heb 2,18).

This would seem to be a plausible solution to the crux at Heb 2,9. One advantage of this proposed solution is that it specifies the way in which

⁷ “L’auteur nous invite à la contemplation chrétienne: pour comprendre le mystère de l’homme et de son rapport avec Dieu, les fidèles regardent Jésus dans le mystère de sa passion et de sa glorification” — A. VANHOYE, *Situation du Christ*. Heb 1–2 (LD 58; Paris 1969) 285–286.

⁸ Cf. Heb 2,13a and its thematic role in the passage.

⁹ Cf. Heb 5,7–8 and J. SWETNAM, “The Crux at Hebrews 5,7–8”, *Bib* 81 (2000) 356–360. Here the author of Hebrews spells out in detail what he suggests in Heb 2,9: that Jesus’ death is a source of salvation for all who obey him in his risen state (τελειωθείς – 5,9). This is analogous to the situation at Heb 2,9.

¹⁰ The “descendants” of Abraham are his spiritual descendants, i.e., all those who, like Abraham, confront death with faith-trust in God. Cf. SWETNAM, “Εξ ἐνός in Hebrews 2,11”, 519.

¹¹ The use of the singular, παντός, for indicating the persons for whom Jesus died is unusual (ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 157) and in the context of Heb 2,9 seems to be designed to emphasize the individual nature of the persons for whom Jesus suffered.

¹² Cf. SWETNAM, “Εξ ἐνός in Hebrews 2,11”, *Bib* 88 (2007) 521–524.

¹³ Freeing from the fear of death is, of course, not the only purpose of Jesus’ dying. Cf. Heb 2,14.17.

Heb 2,15 is realized. With its statement that Jesus came in order to free from the fear of death all children of Abraham who lived in fear of death, Heb 2,15 is a claim without substantiation in conventional exegesis of the epistle. It is a claim seeking explanation. Heb 2,9 gives the explanation.

II. A Re-reading of Heb 2,8b-14

The proposed solution to the crux at Heb 2,9 would seem to open the way for a re-reading of Heb 2,8b-14.

In the above analysis Heb 2,9 is the answer to Heb 2,15. It explains how the goal expressed in Heb 2,15 is realized. That is to say, there seems to be a correspondence between the two verses. Further, if one divides 2,8b-9 from what follows¹⁴ and 2,13b-16 from what follows, one finds that each passage is centered on the death of Jesus: διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου (2,9) and διὰ τοῦ θανάτου (2,14).

Other indications of a pattern within 2,8b-12 and 2,13b-18 seem to present themselves. Following the two sections 2,8b-9 / 2,13b-16 which center on what Jesus suffered — death — the two following sections center on what Jesus did. In 2,10-12 God is the subject of 2,10, but only in order to prepare Jesus for the action of 2,11, in which he “calls” those who share his faith-trust his “brothers”, an act which introduces the Christian *tôdâ* (2,12)¹⁵ and in the Christian *tôdâ* he “announces” to these brothers the Christian name of God¹⁶.

Given these apparent patterns, what seems to suggest itself is that 2,8b-9 / 2,14-16 are about Jesus as victim, and 2,10-12 / 2,17-18 are about Jesus as priest. As earthly victim Jesus “through death” — his own death — annihilates the power of the devil and frees man from fear of death; as heavenly victim Jesus, as a result of his having suffered death as an earthly victim and then being crowned with honor and glory in the resurrection, can taste death for each and every person who trusts as he trusted and who as a result can experience his death and resurrection as he did¹⁷.

¹⁴ This is a commonly accepted division. Cf.: ²⁷N-A; LANE, *Hebrews 1-8*, 52-53 (there is a connection between what precedes 2,10 and what follows, but a break is justified); H.W. ATTRIDGE, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA 1989) 69 and 78.

¹⁵ Cf. SWETNAM, “Ἐξ ἑνός in Hebrews 2,11”, 523.

¹⁶ Cf. SWETNAM, “ὁ ἀπόστολος in Hebrews 3,1”, 256-261.

¹⁷ It is instructive to note that the word θάνατος appears three times in 2,14-16 but not at all in 2,17-18, and once in 2,8b-9, but not at all in 2,10-12. But where it could be reasonably expected to occur (in 2,10) it is only alluded to (by means of the word παθημάτων).

Thus the sub-sections on Jesus as victim introduce the sub-sections of Jesus as priest. Here other patterns seem to present themselves. In 2,17 Jesus “was obliged” (ὀφείλεν) to become like his brothers in all things, i.e., including death, in order to become a merciful and faithful high priest in order to expiate the sins of the people. The inference is from the death of Jesus to his priesthood. ὀφείλεν is introduced by the inferential particle ὅθεν, “wherefore”, which links 2,14-16 with 2,17-18. The descendants of Abraham were subject to death (2,16 in the light of 2,15), therefore Jesus had to become subject to death so that he could become a high priest. This thought is carried through to 2,18, where Jesus’ being “tested” is proposed as a preliminary stage to his help those who are being “tested”. The testing, of course, is with regard to the faith-trust which is the theme of the entire passage 2,8b-18 and which involves both priesthoods and, by supposition, both victimhoods¹⁸.

The note of necessity conveyed by ὀφείλεν with regard to Jesus as earthly high priest is placed in contrast with the note of mere appropriateness with regard to God conveyed by ἐπρεπεν in 2,10 with regard to Jesus as heavenly high priest.¹⁹ The latter verb must be interpreted in the light of the overarching theme of the section 2,5-18: the faith-trust exhibited by Jesus both as earthly high priest and as heavenly high priest (cf. 2,13a) and which is the basis for the designations “children” and “brothers” in the passage. This faith-trust of Jesus is precisely a faith-trust in God, and as such “limits” God’s freedom to a certain extent.²⁰ God is constrained by the nature of the situation to respond in a way that is appropriate — he can hardly ignore a person who trusts in him if he himself

¹⁸ The classic scene about “testing” (πειράζω) in the Old Testament is found at Gen 22 where God tests Abraham to see if he is faithful to the covenant which God made with him with regard to offspring. This centrality in the Old Testament of Abraham with regard to testing is mirrored in Hebrews where Abraham’s testing is central for the thought of the epistle (cf. Heb 11,17-19). Thus at Heb 2,18 the “testing” of Jesus involves his being faithful to God’s covenant with Abraham. Cf. B. GERHARDSSON, *The Testing of God’s Son (Matt 4:1-11 & PAR). An Analysis of An Early Christian Midrash* (CB.NT 2; Lund 1966) 25-35, especially the connection between πειράζω and παιδεία (cf. Heb 12,1-11).

¹⁹ ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 180, thinks that ἐπρεπεν is stronger than ὀφείλεν. But this seems to be a false reading of the two verbs, of a piece with his view that much of Heb 2,17a “restates old ideas in fresh language” (ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 157). The contrast ἐπρεπεν / ὀφείλεν is another indication that the author of Hebrews was contrasting 2,14-18 with 2,8b-12.

²⁰ This “limitation”, of course, is a limitation freely willed by God, for he it was who, “having spoken in a son”, has freely willed the coming of the son.

is responsible for the trust²¹. The author of Hebrews, by way of explanation, indicates immediately after using the verb ἔπρεπεν that all things exist because of God and through God, i.e., God has unlimited possibilities in responding appropriately to the faith-trust of Jesus and his disciples. And thus, by implication he is responsible for the trust in the first place.

What follows in the rest of 2,10 explains what God thought was “appropriate” in the circumstances: “it was appropriate for God that he lead many sons to glory inasmuch as he perfected the originator of their salvation through sufferings”²². That is, given the fact that God’s act of perfecting Jesus was accomplished through the sufferings of Jesus, it was appropriate that God lead many sons to glory thereby²³.

The act of “perfecting” Jesus (τελειόω) is interpreted in various ways, of course. It seems to be incontestably an allusion to the act by which the priests of the old dispensation were consecrated²⁴. In the context of Hebrews it refers to the act by which Jesus was consecrated as heavenly high priest, i.e., the act by which Jesus received his heavenly body, i.e., the resurrection²⁵. Given that Jesus was a sacrificial victim, and given his faith-trust, it was appropriate that in consecrating Jesus heavenly high priest by raising him from the dead, i.e., “through sufferings”, God led many (other) sons to glory through. Jesus, in fact, is the originator of their salvation precisely because of this free choice of God. Jesus is the originator of the sons’ distinctive faith-trust and its perfecter as well (cf. Heb 12,2). That is to say, he is the originator of the distinctive faith-trust that he maintained to its fulfillment in his being raised from the dead by God, and in this

²¹ The covenant relationship which is the background of the “testing” in Hebrews involves obligations on God’s part as well as man’s (obligations which God has freely assumed of course as the initiator of the covenant).

²² Involved in 2,10 is the Greek idiom in which a modal participle becomes the main verb and the main verb becomes a modal participle. Cf. ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 160, and M. ZERWICK, *Graecitas biblica* (Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici; Romae 1966) 88 and 88, n. 1.

²³ The use of the aorist tense for both the act of perfecting Jesus by God and the leading of many sons to glory by God implies that the two actions are in some way terminated in parallel, even if the leading of the sons into glory has yet to be realized fully.

²⁴ Cf. SWETNAM, “Εξ ἐνός in Hebrews 2,11”, 520, and LANE, *Hebrews* 1–8, 57.

²⁵ Cf. H.-F. WEISS, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (KKNT 13; Göttingen 1991) 206: “Das hierbei von Gott als Subjekt ausgesagte τελειοῦν ist im Kontext – zumal von V. 9a her – eindeutig auf die Erhöhung des Sohnes zu beziehen”. Cf. also SWETNAM, “Εξ ἐνός in Hebrews 2,11”, 520.

distinctive faith-trust lies the salvation (σωτηρία)²⁶ of those who call themselves Christians.

The mention of Jesus as the originator of the salvation of the sons with the accompanying allusion to faith-trust leads to the statement in 2,11 that “the sanctifier and those being sanctified” (i.e., all those who have participated inchoately in the salvation begun by Jesus) are “from one”, i.e., from the combined faith-trust of Abraham and faith-trust of Jesus²⁷. This statement is given as the relevant ground for 2,10.

The mention of the word “brothers” in 2,11 leads to the citation of Ps 22,22 at Heb 2,12: the Christian *tôdâ* is where the “sanctifying” takes place. The common faith-trust of Jesus and the Christians alluded to in 2,11 is the basis (δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν) for Jesus’ addressing the Christians in this way. The word “brothers” is taken from Ps 22,22 to prepare for the citation of Ps 22, but it appropriately expresses the relation between Jesus and his followers based on a common faith-trust.

In 2,13a-18 the verses 2,17-18 also seem to build upon the verses 2,13b-16, with the latter being about Jesus as earthly victim and the former being about Jesus as the earthly high priest. 13a presents Jesus as the “recipient” of children given him by God. They are Abraham’s spiritual children, as the text goes on to imply²⁸. Faithful to this thematic perspective, the author of Hebrews presents Jesus’ becoming man from the standpoint of the “children” (2,14) of which, by implication, he became a member. Two purposes are adduced for this taking on of blood and flesh by Jesus: the annihilation of the devil, the one controlling death (2,14b), and the freeing of those who feared death from that fear (2,15). By way of explanation (οὐ γὰρ δέητον) 2,16 states it was not angels whom Jesus took in hand, i.e., beings not subject to death, but the “seed of Abraham”, i.e., those who, like Abraham, have to face death and do so with faith-trust. 2,16 thus sums up 2,13b-15 which has to do with Jesus and death, i.e., Jesus as (sacrificial) victim.

2,17, with its introductory ὁθεν, would seem to introduce a new subsection. Given the fact that his coming involves (sacrificial) death, Jesus had to become like his brothers²⁹ so that he could become a merciful and faithful

²⁶ The word σωτηρία is never explained in Hebrews, which suggests that it is traditional and thus well known to the addressees. Cf. ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 133. The New Testament σωτηρία is a reality expressed in the words of Jesus (cf. Heb 2,3), is eternal (cf. Heb 5,9), and is analogous to the σωτηρία which was the destiny of Noah and his “house” (cf. Heb 3,6).

²⁷ Cf. SWETNAM, “Ἐξ ἐνός in Hebrews 2,11”, 517-525.

²⁸ Cf. SWETNAM, “Ἐξ ἐνός in Hebrews 2,11”, 519.

²⁹ The introduction of the word “brothers” indicates that Jesus had taken on the faith-trust in God which constituted the identity of the “children” God had given him.

high priest. The goal of becoming high priest seems presumed; the qualities of merciful and faithful with regard to the things of God are the point of the need by Jesus to become like these brothers and expiate their sins. The reason for this necessity is given in 2,18: the brothers are being tested, hence Jesus had to be tested.

The inversion of the phrase “flesh and blood” at the beginning of 2,13b-18 into “blood and flesh” (αἷμα καὶ σὰρξ – 2,14) probably suggests that the blood of Jesus will be emphasized in what follows³⁰. In its own verse the inversion seems to lead to mention of Jesus’ death in the same verse, which suggests that the inversion is important for understanding that death. In 2,17 there is the culmination of this part of the exposition with the statement that Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest for the expiation of the sins of the people.

The expiation of sin by Jesus the earthly high priest mentioned in 2,17 is relevant to blood from the standpoint of what is necessary in the Hebrew faith-world for it to occur. But looking in 2,10-12 to the counterpart in what is effected by Jesus the heavenly high priest, one notes the emphasis on sanctification: “the one sanctifying and those being sanctified are all from one”, i.e., are persons who have not only Abrahamic faith-trust but Christian faith-trust as well. In Hebrews sanctification is linked with the shedding of Jesus’ blood either explicitly (9,13; 10,29; 13,12) or implicitly (10,10.14).

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The present note has suggested that the crux in Heb 2,9 which seems to say that Jesus died in order to die should be taken at face value: he died once physically on the cross so that he could die repeatedly in the gaze of those who believe in him and thus be liberated from the fear of death that dogs them. Further, the note has taken the occasion of the apparent parallelism

³⁰ The reason for the inversion is much discussed. Cf. ELLINGWORTH, *Hebrews*, 171. Ellingworth thinks that sacrificial language is “conspicuously absent in Heb 2,14-15”. This, of course, is to beg the question: if the inversion was caused by the desire to give a coloring involving Jesus’ blood, i.e., a coloring of sacrifice, to all that follows, 2,14 takes on the coloring of sacrifice. But apart from this consideration, the word “death” (θάνατος) must be interpreted as it is found elsewhere in the epistle, especially in Heb 2,9, and 2,13a. The three repetitions of θάνατος in 2,14 and 2,15 indicate that death is the crucial reality under consideration, and in the passage 2,5-18 (cf. the thematic 2,13a) it is more plausible to hold that θάνατος as undergone by Jesus is being primarily considered in its sacrificial aspect.

between 2,9 and 2,15 to suggest that the sub-sections 2,8b-12 and 2,14-18 are parallel to each other, with 2,8b-9 (Jesus as heavenly victim) parallel to 2,14-16 (Jesus as earthly victim) and 2,10-12 (Jesus as heavenly high priest) parallel to 2,17-18 (Jesus as earthly high priest). Such a structure sets up multiple perspectives, some of which are explored in the comments accompanying the presentation of the suggestion. If the structure has validity it could mark a step forward in a New Testament understanding of Jesus Christ as high priest.

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SUMMARY

The note suggests that Heb 2,9 means that Jesus died physically so that he could die in the gaze of those who believe in him and thus be freed from the fear of death (2,15). It also suggests that Heb 2,8b-9 is a subsection about Jesus as the heavenly sacrificial victim and corresponds to Heb 2,14-16 which is about Jesus the earthly sacrificial victim. Heb 2,10-12 in turn is a subsection about Jesus as heavenly high priest and corresponds to Heb 2,17-18 which is about Jesus as earthly high priest.

RECENSIONES

Vetus Testamentum

Gregory T.K. WONG, *Compositional Strategy in the Book of Judges. An Inductive, Rhetorical Study* (VTS 111). Leiden – Boston, Brill, 2006. xii-287 p. 16,5 24,5. €99 - \$134.

El c. 1 (1-26) resume la historia de la investigación desde comienzos del siglo XX. Tras exponer la situación inicial y la novedad que supuso la teoría de Noth sobre la Historia deuteronomista, se extiende en la evolución posterior: los estudios diacrónicos (Cross y Smend) no llegan a conclusiones generalmente aceptadas; la lectura sincrónica (Webb, Klein, O'Connell y Amit) tampoco ha logrado unanimidad, provocando la crítica de Anderson, que propone leer el libro de los Jueces como una serie de relatos independientes. Sin embargo, Wong está convencido de que el libro tiene una gran unidad; el fallo de los intentos sincrónicos anteriores ha consistido en no estudiar a fondo la estrecha relación existente entre las diversas partes: prólogo (1,1-2,5), cuerpo central (2,6-16,20) y epílogo (17-19). Al mismo tiempo, Wong pretende resolver el conflicto entre lectura promonárquica o antimonárquica del libro, estudiando con detalle el refrán del los capítulos finales para ver qué sentido tiene en él el término “rey” (*melek*).

El c. 2 (27-77) analiza las relaciones entre el prólogo y el epílogo. Dadas las diferencias lingüísticas, estilísticas y temáticas con el cuerpo central del libro, generalmente se los considera añadidos posteriores. Los estudios literarios han puesto de relieve algunas asociaciones, pero de forma breve y superficial. Por eso conviene estudiar a fondo esas relaciones, para ver si demuestran un proyecto consciente, obra de un autor común. Al mismo tiempo, Wong pretende demostrar que ambas secciones muestran claras referencias al libro de Josué. Con esta finalidad estudia, ante todo, los vínculos temáticos entre el prólogo y el epílogo, que, en su opinión, son cinco: 1) Jerusalén y los jebuseos, mencionados en el prólogo (1,21), no vuelven a aparecer en la parte central, pero sí en el c. 19; irónicamente, el levita, al intentar evitarlos, cae en manos de los guibeonitas; esa ironía sólo puede captarla quien conoce 1,21. 2) Consultas similares en el prólogo y el epílogo terminan con resultados diferentes: a la elección de Judá en el prólogo siguen éxitos, en el epílogo, fracasos, porque en este caso Dios no promete la victoria. La diferencia radica en que el primer caso se trata de luchar contra los cananeos y en el

segundo de luchar contra hermanos. Estos detalles sólo se captan relacionando prólogo y epílogo. 3) Acciones militares usadas adecuadamente en el prólogo e inadecuadamente en el epílogo; se trata del *herem* y de “matar a espada” (*hikah lefi hereb*), expresiones que sólo aparecen en ambas secciones, no en el cuerpo central; y parecen usadas para crear un contraste intencionado entre el comienzo, cuando se aplican a enemigos externos, y el final, cuando se aplican a los propios hermanos en circunstancias discutibles. 4) El llanto en Bokim al comienzo, y en Betel al final, con una expresión (“elevar la voz y llorar”) que sólo aparece en 2,4 y 21,2. 5) Un matrimonio bien pensado al comienzo contrasta con los matrimonios mal dispuestos al final.

En cuanto a las dependencias comunes con el libro de Josué, distingue tres categorías principales: correspondencias literales (conquista de Hebrón y Debir, matrimonio de Acsá, fracaso de expulsar a los jebuseos, etc.); referencias casuales (sorteo de ciertas ciudades a ciertas tribus, referencia a los carros de hierro) y alusiones a episodios de Josué sin aparente relación (la conquista de Luz alude al éxito de la conquista de Jericó; el envío de espías por parte de los danitas alude y contrasta con el envío de espías por Josué; la campaña contra Benjamín alude y contrasta con la campaña contra Ai; el fracaso en el modo de tratar a los benjaminitas alude y contrasta con el éxito de los israelitas en el trato con potenciales transgresores. Estos datos demuestran la unidad de composición del prólogo y el epílogo, que deberían ser atribuidos al mismo autor.

El c. 3 (79-141) estudia las relaciones entre el epílogo y la sección central. Wong admite las innegables diferencias entre las dos secciones, pero subraya que los relatos del epílogo resultan extraños y llenos de incongruencias: todos los personajes actúan de forma inexplicable y toman decisiones que parecen extrañas. Pero en casi todos estos episodios encontramos un eco de algo ocurrido en la vida de uno de los jueces mayores en la sección central: 1) la idolatría de Micá recuerda la idolatría de Gedeón. 2) El levita que viola prácticamente todas las normas levíticas recuerda a Gedeón. 3) Los danitas haciendo lo que les parece bien recuerdan a Sansón. 4) El levita cortejando y abandonando a su concubina recuerda a Sansón cortejando y abandonando a su mujer. 5) La decisión absurda y sorprendente de los benjaminitas de defender a los culpables recuerda el uso absurdo y sorprendente del engaño por parte de Ehud. 6) La dureza con que Israel trata a Benjamín en la guerra recuerda la dureza con la que Gedeón y Jefé tratan a sus connacionales israelitas. 7) El juicio precipitado de los israelitas recuerda el voto precipitado de Jefé que condena a su hija virgen.

En consecuencia, estas alusiones deben proceder de la misma mano, y el epílogo no fue compuesto de manera independiente sino como un comentario a la sección central. A su luz, los jueces no aparecen como

grandes personajes sin tacha, van anticipando la hecatombe cultural, moral y social que advertimos en el epílogo.

El c. 4 (143-190) estudia la relación entre el prólogo y la sección central. Empieza por analizar la estructura retórica del prólogo, que aparece como un informe continuo, salpicado de breves escenas narradas. ¿Qué función desempeñan esas cinco escenas, aparentemente marginales y desconcertantes? Cada una de ellas contiene detalles que las relacionan con otros relatos de la sección central. Por otra parte, el prólogo está organizado de acuerdo con dos trayectorias distintas: una geográfica, orientada de sur a norte; otra descendente, que expresa la incapacidad creciente de las tribus para apoderarse de su territorio. Este esquema presenta un deterioro creciente a medida que avanzamos del sur al norte y que se refleja en la sección central en cinco temas: 1) decreciente falta de fe del juez en Yahvé (casos de Barac, Gedeón, Jefé y Sansón); 2) los jueces cada vez actúan más por propio interés (Gedeón, Jefé, Sansón); 3) las tribus cada vez participan menos en las acciones militares; 4) los jueces cada vez tratan con más dureza las disensiones internas; 5) Yahvé se siente cada vez más frustrado con su pueblo hasta que desaparece el esquema cíclico. Esta coincidencia en el deterioro creciente lleva a Wong a considerar el prólogo como paradigma de la sección central.

El c. 5 (19 1-223) estudia el estribillo «No había rey en Israel». El tema es capital para la unidad del libro, porque es frecuente advertir una postura antimonárquica en la sección central y una postura promonárquica en el epílogo, reflejada en las desgracias que ocurren cuando “no había rey en Israel”. Tras repasar las posturas de Boling y Dumbrell, Wong recorre los diversos personajes a los que puede referirse *melek*: 1) un juez; 2) un rey humano; 3) Yahvé. Lógicamente, son las dos últimas posturas las que atraen su atención, analizando argumentos a favor y en contra, para concluir que *melek* se refiere a Yahvé y, por consiguiente, no existe contradicción entre la sección central y el epílogo. Pero, si Yahvé es el rey, ¿cómo se dice que «por entonces no había rey en Israel»? Esta frase significa que Yahvé no estaba siendo honrado como tal por su pueblo, interpretación que encaja perfectamente con la forma en que se presenta a Dios en el epílogo.

El c. 6 (225-258) estudia la estrategia compositiva y la intención retórica del libro de los Jueces. Con respecto a la estrategia compositiva, la sección central obliga a plantearse la pregunta: ¿por qué el autor ha seleccionado estos relatos y no otros?, ¿por qué incluye a Abimélec y el episodio de la hija de Jefé?, ¿por qué los jueces menores? Todo se puede explicar, con mayor o menor esfuerzo, aunque justificar la inserción de 16,1-3 le cuesta seis páginas, y la de los jueces menores, trece. En cuanto a la intención retórica, se trata del «deterioro creciente», que viene dado por la estructura del libro y por su contenido. Tanto el pueblo como sus jefes

aparecen cada vez peor. La raíz de este deterioro la ofrece el autor en la sección final. Contra la opinión de muchos especialistas, el problema no es de carácter político (falta de monarquía) sino espiritual: la negativa de Israel de reconocer a Yahvé como rey. En esto tienen culpa los jefes, que contribuyen al culto idolátrico, abrazan costumbres cananeas, tratan a sus conciudadanos con más dureza que los mismos enemigos, hacen votos precipitados y violan las normas asociadas a su vocación.

Wong termina indicando dos consecuencias de su estudio: 1) El libro de los Jueces es la creación artística de un solo autor. 2) A pesar de ello, se advierten sutiles diferencias de estilo e interés entre las diversas partes; mientras el prólogo y el epílogo pueden ser considerados composiciones originales del autor, su papel en la sección central es más parecido al de un redactor creativo.

Aunque la tesis fundamental de Wong no me convence, su libro me ha resultado muy interesante y útil, repleto de observaciones sugerentes, escrito en un lenguaje claro, perfectamente estructurado en el desarrollo de sus partes. Una obra que aconsejo a quien desee profundizar en el libro de los Jueces. Como aspectos discutibles indico los siguientes:

1) Su argumentación se basa en los vínculos retóricos («rhetorical links»), pero esas sutiles alusiones resultan a veces forzadas. Por ejemplo, no es lo mismo rapto-violación-muerte que rapto-matrimonio (véase 132); y la demostración de que la fe de Sansón es inferior a la de Gedeón y Jefté resulta poco convincente.

2) Para justificar esas relaciones subraya el carácter desconcertante de algunos relatos; así ocurre al tratar Jue 17-18 (personalmente, lo que me llama la atención en estos capítulos no es su carácter extraño sino su ironía continua) y al hablar de las cinco escenas insertas en Jue 1, que considera «marginales y desconcertantes» (pueden interpretarse como un deseo de dar variedad y amenidad a lo que habría sido una fría enumeración). Por eso, a menudo me ha venido a la mente el axioma escolástico: «quod nimis probat, nihil probat».

3) Las teorías que proponen haber descubierto algo absolutamente nuevo después de tantos siglos me despiertan cierta sospecha. Hablando de la relación entre la sección central y el epílogo, afirma Wong que el autor, «skilful in his art», quizá pretendió sugerir cierta relación de causa-efecto entre las acciones de los jueces y el colapso cultural, moral y social reflejado en el epílogo (140); pero ese autor ha tenido que esperar veinticinco siglos, hasta que Wong ha descubierto su intención de criticar a los jueces.

4) Dado que al final concluye que el prólogo del autor abarca 1,1-3,11, debería haberlo estudiado así a comienzos del c. 4, donde habla del prólogo como paradigma. De lo contrario, se ofrece un esquema de la estructura retórica que no corresponde a la realidad.

5) ¿Se puede decir que ese prólogo (1,1-3,11) pertenece al mismo autor? ¿Cómo podría afirmar en 1,1 que Josué ha muerto y presentarlo en 2,6 despidiendo al pueblo? Además, en 2,6-19 encontramos diversas concepciones del juez, y en 2,20-3,6 se aducen diversos motivos para justificar la permanencia de pueblos paganos.

6) Echo de menos un estudio de las diferencias de tipo lingüístico. Por ejemplo, en un libro tan marcado por la idolatría, resulta curioso que la metáfora del adulterio (expresada con la fórmula *zanah 'aharê*) sólo aparezca tres veces (2,17; 8,27.33); resulta evidente que esos textos provienen de una mano distinta.

A pesar de estos desacuerdos, insisto en que el libro me ha resultado muy agradable de lectura y ha enriquecido mucho mi conocimiento de los Jueces.

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Archibald L. H. M. VAN WIERINGEN, *The Reader-Oriented Unity of the Book of Isaiah* (Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese van de Bijbel en zijn Tradities Supplement Series 6). Vught, Uitgeverij Skandalon, 2006. xi-306. 17 × 24.

This book by van Wieringen is an attempt to break new ground in critical consideration of the Book of Isaiah. The study is quite self-aware and self-conscious about method, and consequently contains a good bit of methodological jargon, the meaning of which is not always clear. The author is fully aware of previous efforts at the “unity” of the book of Isaiah, and moves easily back and forth between diachronic and synchronic approaches. The several phases of Isaiah study are clearly and fully delineated: (a) pre-critical assumptions about single Isaiah authorship, (b) the first critical phases of I, II, and III Isaiah, and (c) the second, contemporary phase of criticism which is linked to the notion of “canon theory” and features the contributions of Brevard Childs, Ronald Clements, Rolf Rendtorff, and Marvin Tate. Beyond these approaches the author now moves toward a “reader oriented” “communicative” exegetical study that bears the marks of structuralist notions and terminology. By “reader oriented”, van W. seems to mean what one notices if one comes to the text without the usual critical assumptions. The introduction of this new phase of research represented by the author is heavy going on jargon; what is clear is that the author intends to break completely with standard critical assumptions, and begin with synchronic issues that prepare the

way for diachronic judgments. Thus the beginning point is a radical inversion of usual procedures. This reviewer has found the actual argument from this approach more compelling than the programmatic introduction to it.

The elucidation of this fresh perspective consists in five more or less independent studies that are introduced by a synchronic survey of the book. The author presents a close study of scribal notations and divisions in the book. The most interesting point of this survey is his observation that the same formula, *'ên shalôm*, occurs in 48,22 and 57,21. On the basis of this reiteration and other close details, van W. judges that the old division between chapter 55 and chapter 56 is not credible and proposes to divide chapters 40–66 into 40,1–48,22, 48,23–57,21, and finally 57,22–66,24. Because this judgment is so decisive for the general argument, one may wonder if so much weight can be attached to a repeated formula.

After the introductory survey, the argument moves with more clarity through five studies. First, the author considers the “implications of time” in the Book of Isaiah. Negatively it is clear to the author that the familiar sequence of “Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian periods” in the book has little support in the text itself and in fact is not available to the implied reader. Time in the Book of Isaiah is not at all correlated to the several imperial nations, as is usual in critical study. Rather van W. studies formulae for time in the text, “in the days of”, “the day of the lord”, “in that day”, and most especially “latter days”. This close reading suggests that time in the book of Isaiah refers to the actions of YHWH and consequences of YHWH’s actions for Jerusalem with reference to political history. Special attention is given to what he terms “now moments” that are anticipated but lie outside the realization of the text itself. Five “now moments” are identified in Isaiah 40–66 (40,1c; 44,1; 47,8; 48,1; 52,1.5.7). The anticipated “now moments” are not in hand, but are sure to come, crisis moments when God’s newness breaks in upon Jerusalem in a way that alters world history. These anticipations emphasize YHWH’s kingship in Zion, and are thus a continuation of the “comfort” that was asserted in 40,1. This analysis of time is representative of the approach of this study. The text is understood in terms of its own perception of time that is offered to the implied reader without reference to *Realpolitik*. Time, in this attestation, concerns the rule of God. Inside the text, time is a theological datum, even though its fruition lies outside the text itself. Van W. is rigorous in staying within the text that is offered to the implied reader.

The second study, concerning space, seems to this reviewer much more clear and represents something of a tour de forc. The main point is that all space issues concern “coming to Jerusalem”. There is, in the Book of

Isaiah, no going away from Jerusalem, no explicit notion of exile or deportation, and only an allusion to it in chapter 39. The movement is all toward Jerusalem that is traced in three distinct waves. There is, first of all, the threat of hostile armies that come to Jerusalem, traced in some detail in 10,28-32. Second there is the coming of Israel to Jerusalem in celebrative well-being, for which the image of the “highway” becomes an important metaphor (35,8; 40,3). And third, there is the coming of the nations to Jerusalem in peaceable assembly, notably in 2,2-5 but elsewhere in the latter part of the book as well. The effect of this focus on coming to Jerusalem is to make Jerusalem the epicenter of all reality, a primary claim of the Book in its final form.

The third study concerns the “double function” of “Isaiah” as both “discursor/narrator” and “character”. In this brief chapter van W. observes that Isaiah’s role as character is limited to a few references. Much more important is Isaiah’s role as “discursor/narrator” that is traced by way of superscriptions through 1–39. Special attention is given to Isaiah 40,1-11 where a new “discursor” is introduced, “the heraldess of good tidings to Zion and to Jerusalem”. In the later chapters of the book, the first person address occurs frequently, whereby the second discursor can address a “we-group” that is inclusive and is addressed as the implied reader. The chapter appears to give fresh names and labels to literary phenomena that are self-evident, in order that the discourse can be considered as an address of an implied author to an implied reader. In the chapter that follows, van W. considers “reader-oriented roles” and takes up in turn “king” (YHWH as king, Ahaz, and Hezekiah who is connected to Immanu-el”) and “servant”. The drama suggests an important parallel and similarity between Immanu-el and the servant. The third role considered is “enemies” who are seen to be “enemies of God”. In contrast to the enemies, the fourth role is that of “Zion” who is variously vulnerable and abandoned, but also to be restored.

Thus far the several topics under consideration keep the entire book of Isaiah in purview. The conclusion of this analysis, however, concerns the beginning and end of the book, a focus that in other contexts has been regarded as “canonical”. Van V. offers an intensely close reading of chapter 1 with special attention to the direct speeches of YHWH. In like manner, 66,5-24 receives close attention, and direct divine speeches are again highlighted. The two analyses are placed side by side with little effort to relate the two to each other beyond the notice of direct address.

In a remarkable reversal of usual method, van W. seeks to situate his diachronic analysis of the book on the basis of his synchronic analysis that I have reviewed above. Van W. begins his diachronic analysis with the recognition of the major caesura between 39,8 and 40,1, an eclipse that is reinforced by the disruption of thought that causes a jolting discontinuity in

the text. Such “aposiopesis” van W. takes as evidence of redactional activity, namely, the post-exilic work of attaching 1–39 to the literature of the crisis of exile. Thus 40–66 constitutes the core of the book, but the key to redactional activity is not located there. Rather the “diachronic motor” of the book is located in Isaiah 36–38 and the literature of chapter 36–37 is “the motor of the Isaian hermeneutic”. Van W. shows how various other texts are best understood in relation to Isaiah 36–38, so that the completed whole serves as a post-exilic reflection on Zion. On this reading everything is drawn later to serve post-exilic reflection. Even texts such as chapter 7 on the Syro-Ephraimite War are in fact to be located for the implied reader in the post-exilic period.

It is evident that the Book of Isaiah is enormously complex. Van W., moreover, has offered an analysis of the book that is itself as complex as is the Book of Isaiah. While van W.’s several specific studies on time, space, and narrator-character are of great interest and instructive on many points, it is not clear to this reader how they serve the larger hypothesis that his book seeks to advance. My expectation is that readers will be greatly informed by his clear attention to the texts, but that they will not easily or readily follow the large interpretive leap that the author takes from his analysis, for such a leap may strike others, as it does this reviewer, as possible, but not at all necessary, and so lacking in persuasiveness.

The book is a serious, careful work that proceeds with rather dense categories that render the argument not always accessible and therefore far from clear. But the book does confirm two important conclusions. First, it becomes clear how greatly the assumptions of a “critical consensus” control, direct, and limit our reading of the text. Second, van W. makes clear that once one disregards the consensus critical assumptions, one can begin to see the complexity of the book in very different ways. In the long run, I anticipate that this book will be of value not so much for its conclusions but because of its heuristic work in urging that the book of Isaiah be perceived afresh. We will no doubt need to ponder for a while the author’s bold insistence that synchronic analysis may precede diachronic analysis. My impression is that the diachronic (after the synchronic) may not be very important or very interesting. The book is one more reading of a text that is like a Rorschach test. It is, however, sober and judicious, and will make a difference to those who come after who pay close attention.

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Doug INGRAM, *Ambiguity in Ecclesiastes* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 431). New York – London, T&T Clark, 2006. xii-299 p. 15,5 × 23,5, £80.00.

Il lavoro di Ingram costituisce la rielaborazione di una tesi dottorale (Ph.D.) presentata nel 1996 all'Università di Stirling; l'autore afferma di aver scritto la Prefazione nel 2003 (vii), ma il volume esce soltanto nel 2006. Ingram dichiara altresì di aver appreso l'ebraico proprio per poter studiare il Qohelet e rafforzare così la propria convinzione che tale libro è fondamentalmente ambiguo per un voluto disegno dell'autore; si tratta della tesi di fondo dell'opera.

Il primo capitolo del libro (1-43) è dedicato a rispondere a una domanda di fondo: che cos'è l'ambiguità? Essa è una sorta di indeterminazione del senso, il che porta tuttavia a riflettere sul fatto che la stessa idea di "senso" ("meaning") è in sé altamente ambigua. L'impostazione del discorso di Ingram sull'ambiguità si fonda dichiaratamente sulla *Reader Response Theory* di W. Iser che presuppone una interazione tra autore, testo e lettore. Nel caso del libro del Qohelet, vista la presupposta ambiguità dell'intera opera, il ruolo del lettore è particolarmente importante; è lui, infatti, che è chiamato a riempire gli spazi di indeterminatezza e ambiguità lasciati dal testo.

La scelta di Ingram (37) è quella di offrire un'analisi di alcune parole-chiave del Qohelet per mostrarne la natura ambigua e far vedere come proprio tale ambiguità incoraggi il ruolo del lettore nella lettura di un libro che proprio per questo può assumere differenti significati.

Il secondo capitolo (44-74) affronta più direttamente un tale problema all'interno del Qohelet. La conclusione di Ingram è che una lettura positiva o negativa del Qohelet, ottimista o pessimista, dipende in gran parte dall'interpretazione del singolo lettore; ma questo accadrebbe proprio perché il nostro libro è volutamente ambiguo e aperto a letture opposte. Qui Ingram riprende l'idea già esposta da C.G. Bartholomew (*Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory* [AnBib 139; Rome 1998]), che cioè i commentatori del Qohelet hanno sempre fatto poca attenzione ai *gaps* creati continuamente dall'autore all'interno del testo; la mancanza di consenso tra i commentatori del Qohelet sarebbe un indizio del fatto che il libro è volutamente indeterminato. L'analisi del testo di Qo 1,4-11 serve poi come primo esempio del carattere ambiguo del Qohelet.

Tutto il corpo del libro, dal capitolo 3 al capitolo 8, è dedicato all'analisi di una serie di parole-chiave. In primo luogo (75-90) si esamina la natura ambigua del nome stesso che dà il titolo al libro, il *Qohelet*. Gran parte dell'argomentazione si basa sull'idea che il termine "figlio" in Qo 1,1 possa indicare non Salomone, ma un "discendente" di David, e che il termine *melek* possa essere inteso come "consigliere" (76-78). Ingram

segue in realtà – senza però dirlo – la proposta di H.L. Ginsberg (*Studies in Kohelet* [Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America 17; New York 1950], 9-10.13-14). Tale proposta, tuttavia, pur se possibile, non si rivela accettabile per Qo 1,1.12 (cf. A. Schoors, *The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words; a study of the language of Qoheleth* [OrLovAnal 143; Louvain 2004] II, 287), splendida opera che, pur uscita nel 2004, Ingram non cita neppure nella bibliografia conclusiva). Ingram nota altresì l'ambiguità insita nel modo in cui l'epilogo parla del Qohelet (Qo 12,9-14), ambiguità che ha condotto i commentatori a un radicale disaccordo sul senso dell'epilogo stesso.

Il quarto capitolo (91-129) è dedicato all'analisi di *hebel*, forse il più intrigante dei termini usati dal Qohelet. Ingram non ci dice, alla fine, qual è il senso che egli attribuisce a *hebel*; piuttosto afferma che tale termine è aperto a più di un'interpretazione e che ciò fa parte di una precisa strategia retorica utilizzata dall'autore. Come nei capitoli che seguono, Ingram si ferma prima sulle interpretazioni offerte dai diversi commentatori, poi analizza il senso del termine nel contesto della Bibbia ebraica e infine prende in considerazione il suo uso nel Qohelet.

Il terzo termine analizzato (130-149) è *yitrôn*; se il senso è relativamente chiaro ("advantage"), non lo è la sua precisa funzione nel contesto del libro, in particolare nella domanda programmatica di 1,3, che è aperta a diverse letture possibili. Il capitolo sesto (140-168) è dedicato a una coppia di termini, *'amal* e *'asah*. In particolare: qual è la differenza tra i due termini?

Il settimo capitolo, il più lungo del libro, è dedicato all'analisi del termine *tôb* (169-249). Si tratta evidentemente di un termine chiave del libro; per Ingram il testo di 2,3 è forse il più significativo al riguardo. Il problema è che cosa *tôb* in realtà significhi e che cosa significhi, soprattutto, dire che qualcosa è "buono". Brevemente, Ingram chiude il suo studio con poche pagine (250-261) dedicate all'espressione *taḥat haššemeš*, anch'essa considerata un'espressione ambigua.

Le conclusioni del libro (262-272), che precedono immediatamente la bibliografia, sono chiare: "my conclusion is that the text of Ecclesiastes is highly ambiguous, and the intention of the author are often far from clear (...) It is thus a very accurate reflection of life under the sun: it too is highly ambiguous, and the intention of its Author (or Creator) are also often unclear" (271).

La tesi sostenuta da Ingram è davvero interessante e realmente intrigante; il problema delle contraddizioni esistenti all'interno del Qohelet è infatti ben noto ad ogni commentatore, sin dall'antichità, e non sembra ancora del tutto risolto. Secondo Ingram, ci troviamo piuttosto di fronte a un preciso disegno nel quale l'ambiguità caratterizza l'intero libro ed è qualcosa di voluto dall'autore.

C'è da subito chiedersi se la proposta di Ingram non nasca proprio, come del resto lui stesso sembra ammettere, dall'*impasse* nella quale si trovano i commentatori del Qohelet, che lo interpretano in direzioni spesso opposte in modo assolutamente radicale.

Ingram sceglie, per dimostrare l'esistenza di un preciso disegno di ambiguità, di percorrere la via dell'analisi lessicale; ma questa, da sola, non basta, come è evidente dalla lettura dello splendido secondo volume di A. Schoors sul vocabolario del Qohelet, che tuttavia non ha affatto posto la parola fine all'interpretazione del libro (cf. il già ricordato *The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words*).

La tesi di Ingram sulla radicale ambiguità dell'intero libro non convince appieno; i *gaps* presenti nel Qohelet sono certamente stati ignorati dalla maggior parte di commentatori (cf. *sopra*). Tuttavia, l'ambiguità del testo deve essere compresa a diversi livelli come parte della strategia dell'autore, prima di ipotizzare l'esistenza di un'opera in se stessa interamente e volutamente ambigua.

L'ambiguità del Qohelet spesso consiste, a livello letterario, in possibili doppi sensi di un'intera frase (cf. 1,8a: "tutte le parole si stancano/sono stancanti" oppure "tutte le cose sono stanche"?), cf. 64-66) o di giochi di parole su un termine (cf. il celebre *bôr'êkâ*, il "tuo creatore", di Qo 12,1, un possibile gioco di parole su termini omofoni come *b'êr*, "pozzo" e *bôr*, "fossa"), gioco di parole già notato fin dall'antichità).

Tale ambiguità è tuttavia, a mio parere, al servizio di un messaggio che l'autore vuole comunicare, messaggio che non è (o non è necessariamente) ambiguo. Osservo a questo proposito che al termine della lettura del libro di Ingram non si riesce a comprendere appieno quale opinione si sia fatto lo stesso Ingram del messaggio del Qohelet, al di là del ripetere che il testo è volutamente ambiguo. Un buon esempio di questo modo di procedere è la dettagliata analisi del testo di Qo 4,17-5,6 dedicato al culto (205-212), analisi al termine della quale Ingram afferma che il testo del Qohelet non ci dice Dio sia un essere distante e impersonale o qualcuno di cui aver rispetto.

L'ambiguità rientra poi in quell'atteggiamento ironico che – questo sì! – caratterizza l'intero libro e in particolare la finzione regale presente in Qo 1,12-2,26; cf. F.J. Backhaus, "Kohélet und die Ironie", *Biblische Notizen* 101 (2000) 29-55 e soprattutto R. Vignolo, "La poetica ironica di Qohelet. Contributo allo sviluppo di un orientamento critico", *Teologia* 25 (2000) 217-240, ma Ingram ignora entrambi gli studi. Così ad esempio la stessa figura del *Qohelet* è ambigua nel senso che l'autore del libro ci presenta ironicamente un'esperienza che a prima vista sembra quella di un re saggio e felice, ma che si trasforma in un evidente fallimento.

Eppure se non c'è "profitto" (*yitrôn*) per l'uomo sotto il sole c'è un *hēleq*, una "parte" che all'uomo spetta (cf. ad esempio Qo 3,22; 5,18). Le

pagine dedicate da Ingram all'analisi di *yitrôn* non tengono conto che l'ambiguità del termine nasce in gran parte dalla sua contrapposizione a *hēleq*. Il messaggio del testo non è per nulla ambiguo: chi rincorre il profitto, lo *yitrôn*, non lo trova; chi, invece, accoglie il dono di Dio (pur semplice, fugace e limitato) come "parte" che Dio offre all'uomo senza alcun merito da parte di quest'ultimo, è in grado di trovare invece ciò che è *tôb* per lui.

In altre occasioni l'ambiguità andrebbe piuttosto ridefinita alla luce del linguaggio metaforico utilizzato dal Qohelet; è questo il caso del termine *hebel*, che non è di per sé ambiguo; il significato letterale di "soffio" è infatti ben stabilito (cf. Schoors, *The Preacher Sought*, II, 120). Il problema è piuttosto il senso del vocabolo all'interno del libro; *hebel* può assumere significati diversi (anche se il doppio senso di "effimero" e "assurdo" rimane a mio parere quello centrale), ma ciò avviene perchè il Qohelet usa una metafora che, come tale, è polisemica, piuttosto che ambigua.

È possibile infine pensare che in alcuni casi l'ambiguità possa essere risolta piuttosto pensando alla possibilità già intravista da R. Gordis e N. Whybray che il Qohelet inserisca citazioni della sapienza tradizionale per poi criticarle. Questa possibilità è appena sfiorata nel testo di Ingram e anch'essa inserita nel quadro di una sostanziale ambiguità (cf. 140, n. 50).

Resta il fatto che il libro di Ingram ha il sicuro pregio di ammonire gli studiosi del Qohelet perchè non rinchiudano il libro nella gabbia di un'unica interpretazione, non di rado stabilita *a priori*. L'ambiguità, anche se a mio parere non può essere estesa all'intera opera senza rischiare di forzarla, è senz'altro una caratteristica dello stile del nostro saggio. Ingram ha inoltre il merito non piccolo di sottolineare con forza il ruolo del lettore nell'interpretazione del Qohelet che il Qohelet stesso con la sua ambiguità (e, aggiungo, con la sua ironia) ha preparato.

Last but not least: l'analisi di Ingram ignora per lo più la tradizione ebraica e patristica; quanto ai commentatori moderni di cui egli fa largo uso (si veda la rassegna delle interpretazioni fatta alle pp. 44-48) Ingram si limita a presentare autori di lingua inglese, con qualche eccezione realmente occasionale per qualche tedesco e un paio di francesi; l'unica citazione di un autore italiano (a parte le traduzioni inglesi di U. Eco) è una citazione di seconda mano (97, n. 29) di B. Pennacchini, "Qohelet, ovvero il libro degli assurdi").

Bernard S. JACKSON, *Wisdom-Laws. A Study of the Mishpatim of Exodus 21:1–22:16*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, xv-552 p., 16 × 24, €120.14.

Le corpus des lois qui est regroupé dans les chapitres 21 et 22 de l'Exode peut apparaître, au lecteur non spécialiste du droit du Proche-Orient ancien, comme une suite disparate. Porter un tel jugement serait cependant faire peu de cas de son emplacement car nous constatons que ces prescriptions se situent en tête de ce que l'on a désigné sous le nom de *Code de l'Alliance* et elles viennent juste avant les lois morales (Ex 22,17-27), celles concernant l'année sabbatique (Ex 23,10-13), celles sur les fêtes d'Israël (Ex 23,14-19) et les promesses et instructions en vue de l'entrée en Canaan (Ex 23,20-33). Voici un contexte qui doit inciter à regarder avec plus d'attention un ensemble qui se présente bien plus comme une "introduction à la sainteté du peuple devant son Dieu" que comme une collection annexe de textes légaux subsidiaires. Le seul fait que ces *Lois de sagesse* s'ouvrent sur les prescriptions relatives aux esclaves hébreux et sur leur libération la septième année nous montre dans quel contexte se placent les rédacteurs de ces textes.

En choisissant d'étudier ce corpus, Bernard S. Jackson (Alliance Family Professor of Modern Jewish Studies, University of Manchester) aurait pu se contenter de les prendre une à une, en ayant simplement indiqué leur contexte, et en les analysant par rapport au droits des autres peuples du Proche-Orient ancien, cela eût déjà été un travail des plus intéressant. Mais l'auteur ne s'est pas contenté de cela et s'il a dû dresser, en quelque sorte, un catalogue analytique de ces lois dans la seconde partie de son ouvrage (77-383), il a fait précéder celui-ci d'une forte introduction (1-77) où il étudie non seulement la typologie des *Lois de sagesse* mais élargit son propos en montrant le rapport entre loi et sagesse dans la Bible vétérotestamentaire. Enfin, dans une troisième partie (385-478), il nous expose une histoire institutionnelle et littéraire des *Mishpatim*. Nous nous proposons non pas de parcourir entièrement ce vaste travail mais d'en relever certains points qui éclairent l'ensemble et mettent en évidence les divers points de ce volume.

Avant de nous proposer ses propres prolégomènes à une lecture juridique des *Lois de sagesse*, l'auteur se livre à une lecture critique des travaux de Raymond Westbrook (10-16) sur la nature même des lois du Proche-Orient ancien (bibliographie de R. Westbrook, 510-511). Ces pages sont intéressantes car elles nous montrent le point d'ars entre deux écoles: une conception d'un "modèle légal" fonctionnant pour le droit cunéiforme et biblique ou celle d'une lecture plus "parcellaire" du droit ancien qui le lierait à chaque contexte littéraire. Il est évident que les préférences de Bernard Jackson vont vers cette dernière approche qui va être en arrière

plan de sa lecture des deux chapitres de l'Exode. Il nous semble qu'il ne faille cependant pas privilégier la prééminence du contexte littéraire pour expliquer les lois bibliques, et particulièrement celles qui apparaissent ici car on retrouve des textes juridiques qui peuvent leur être comparés dans le droit cunéiforme bien antérieur et l'hypothèse de non continuité développée par Van Seters dans différents articles (bibliographie de Van Seters, 508) doit également être critiquée comme trop absolue, ce que ne manque d'ailleurs pas de faire B. Jackson (18s.) De fait, il nous semble que l'on doive bien plus tenir que autant la culture juridique que la culture littéraire dépendent de leur inscription dans un phénomène de civilisation(s), dans le cas présent celle du Proche Orient ancien où s'insère l'Israël biblique. N'oublions pas que cette histoire, qui va de la Mésopotamie aux rives de la Méditerranée, s'étend sur trois millénaires et ce qui doit surprendre n'est pas de trouver des différences mais bien des parentés entre des textes légaux chronologiquement fort éloignés les uns des autres.

La critique que Jackson fait de la théorie avancée par Moshe Greenberg, "Some Postulate of Biblical Criminal Law", *Yehezkeel Kaufman Jubilee Volume* (éd. M. Haran) (Jerusalem 1960) 5-28; "More Reflexions on Biblical Criminal Law", *Studies in Law* (éd. S. Japhet) (Scripta Hierosolymitana xxxi; Jerusalem 1986) 1-17, concerne bien l'opposition entre un "droit" biblique considéré comme tel et un droit tributaire d'une culture scribale littéraire; quand bien même on peut reprocher un certain systématisme à Greenberg, au moins dans la première formulation de sa thèse, il n'en reste pas moins vrai que si l'ensemble du droit du Proche Orient ancien montre une dépendance du droit par rapport aux civilisations (et comment en irait-il autrement?) il présente aussi une forte autonomie en lui-même, c'est-à-dire comme "matière différenciée".

Le problème que posent les "cas d'école" juridiques, dont la formulation montre bien qu'ils ont été imaginés par leurs rédacteurs à partir d'une extrapolation d'un ou plusieurs cas réels ne doit pas être impliqué à une influence de la culture littéraire mais bien, ainsi que le pose d'ailleurs pertinemment B. Jackson, à la culture juridique des scribes qui les pousse à imaginer toutes les possibilités et même les impossibilités découlant d'un cas légal donné. Et cela les relie encore davantage à la tradition mésopotamienne où l'on connaît les imposantes listes évoquant tous les développements d'une question, même les moins réalistes.

Ceci posé, et qui montre bien combien il serait hasardeux d'avancer une hypothèse absolument tranchée sur l'origine des lois qui nous intéressent ici, l'auteur va étudier soigneusement celles-ci, dans l'ordre où le texte biblique nous les présente. Le moins que l'on puisse dire est que ces études sont exhaustives et "prennent le temps" d'examiner tous les aspects de chaque problème. Ainsi que nous l'avons relevé, la thèse de l'influence littéraire sur la formation de ce droit reste constamment en arrière plan et

nous n'en voulons comme exemple que la recherche menée par B. Jackson sur le "bœuf encorneur".

Le problème posé par un bovin encornant un passant est clairement posé par Ex 21,28-32, avec un développement qui introduit la question de l'accident (Ex 21,28) et celle de la négligence du propriétaire pour un animal dangereux (Ex 21,29). On trouve un parallèle à cette loi dans *Eshnunna* 53 et ce point a été particulièrement étudié par R. Yaron, *The Laws of Eshnunna* (Jerusalem ²1969/1988) 292, ainsi que par J.J. Finkelstein, "The Goring Ox: Some Historical Perspective on Deodands, Forfeitures, Wrongful Death and the Western Notion of Sovereignty", *TAPhS* 72 (1981) sp. 41-45. Alors que R. Yaron met en évidence la continuité juridique entre les deux cas, Finkelstein met cette dernière en doute et préfère une influence littéraire, hypothèse à laquelle B. Jackson donne sa préférence. S'il est exact que la loi biblique est plus développée que son parallèle cunéiforme, faut-il pour autant y voir l'influence d'une origine purement littéraire? N'est-ce pas plutôt dû à la différence chronologique entre les deux? Comprendons bien que, avec ces deux textes, nous sommes, en quelque sorte, aux deux extrémités d'une chaîne dont les maillons ne nous sont pas visibles; le problème traité dans *Eshnunna* et qui concerne uniquement l'encornement d'un bovin par un autre bovin a sans doute servi de référence, de point de départ, aux juristes ultérieurs qui ont dû se pencher sur des problèmes similaires mais concernant des victimes humaines et le droit — qui rappelons-le, ne précède jamais les faits mais les suit — s'est progressivement développé. Qu'il y ait une influence religieuse dans Ex 21 (le bovin sera lapidé) est indéniable, mais si l'on s'intéresse à l'origine même du droit, il faut bien remonter à *Eshnunna*!

La troisième partie de ce volume va, ainsi que nous l'avons indiqué, être consacrée à un élargissement de la problématique qui, délaissant l'analyse du seul texte, va s'intéresser à l'histoire institutionnelle et à l'histoire littéraire des *Mishpatim*. C'est encore une fois poser le problème des origines de ce droit et, en suivant l'auteur, nous découvrons dans toute la première partie de cette *conclusion*, la multiplicité des sources des décisions judiciaires et aussi l'influence des diverses situations liées à l'histoire de l'Israël biblique. La suite, sans surprise pour le lecteur, va faire la part belle à la théorie de "l'histoire littéraire" des *Mishpatim*. Il faut reconnaître que le raisonnement est séduisant, même si la démonstration n'est pas toujours absolument convaincante; mais on doit poser la question de la composition littéraire des Livres bibliques où nous rencontrons des paragraphes indubitablement juridiques parmi des narrations historiques, des dissertations théologiques ou des considérations morales. Qui dépend de qui? Et si aucun ne dépendait de l'autre mais tous d'un mode de pensée selon lequel la nécessaire différenciation formelle des genres littéraires est seconde par rapport à l'affirmation d'une unité voulue par la divinité et

donnée à son peuple comme telle? C'est introduire là une idée théologique dans ce qui semblait juridique et littéraire, mais la Bible n'est ni un code juridique ni un texte littéraire et, sous peine de manquer son but, on ne peut faire l'économie de la lecture théologique (plus dans le sens de "discours de Dieu" que de "discours sur Dieu") qui était la préoccupation première des rédacteurs et compilateurs de ces Livres. Peut être Bernard Jackson ne s'est-il pas assez penché sur cette composante du problème?

En conclusion, et sans dénier le grand intérêt que présente son étude, on se doit de la considérer comme l'une des lectures possibles des lois de Lv 21-22 tout en la confrontant avec d'autres approches: c'est ainsi qu'avance la recherche et c'est ainsi que Bernard Jackson a apporté sa pierre à l'édifice.

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Jakob WÖHRLE, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuchs. Entstehung und Komposition* (BZAW 360). Berlin-New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2006, xii-499 p. 16 × 23,5 €118

L'ouvrage de J. Wöhrle s'inscrit dans une longue recherche sur la constitution du corpus des Douze prophètes commencée avec H. Ewald en 1867, poursuivie par C. Steuernagel (1912), K. Budde (1921), R.E. Wolfe (1933), D.A. Schneider (1979), A.Y. Lee (1985), E. Bosshard (1987). L'auteur estime qu'un tournant décisif a été pris au début des années 90, avec le recours en force à l'histoire de la rédaction qui caractérise les recherches de J. Nogalski (1993), B.A. Jones (1995), E. Bosshard-Nepustil (1997), A. Scharf (1998) que J. Wöhrle considère comme l'un des essais les plus aboutis jusqu'à lors sur ce sujet (17), et K.S. Yu (2000). A ces travaux récents, des critiques ont été adressées notamment par E. Ben-Zvi (1996).

Au terme d'un examen attentif de l'histoire de la recherche, l'auteur constate que les différents essais ne proposent pas de méthode totalement convaincante (19) et il en tire des conclusions (24-27). Pour conduire rigoureusement l'opération, on doit identifier des indices fiables de regroupements entre livres. La question des critères se pose immédiatement et, plus largement, celle de l'hypothèse globale dans laquelle on va entreprendre la recherche. Il faut décider, en effet, entre deux modèles principaux: ou bien le corpus regroupe des livres déjà achevés, ou bien le regroupement est progressif et il laisse des traces identifiables dans les livres. Il importe ensuite de vérifier si un élément thématique ou rédactionnel présent dans plusieurs livres constitue un indice de regroupement? Cette complexité conduit l'auteur à estimer qu'il faut commencer par traiter les livres séparé-

ment sans tenir compte des points communs. Ensuite, on mettra l'accent sur les liens et les rapports existant entre les strates rédactionnelles reconnues dans chacun des livres afin de déterminer des parallèles thématiques et terminologiques. L'idéal serait de soumettre chacun des livres, à partir d'un certain stade et selon un ordre identique, à un même traitement.

Devant l'ampleur de la tâche, l'auteur envisage, dans une première étape, de ne s'intéresser qu'à la formation et à la composition des premiers recueils, qui concerne les livres d'Osée, Amos, Michée et Sophonie, Aggée et Zacharie et, en dernier lieu, Joël. Le reste fera l'objet d'une seconde étude et le livre d'Osée, en raison des problèmes spécifiques qu'il pose, justifiera une étude spéciale. L'auteur prend comme point de départ l'étude des titres et des introductions, en la confrontant à l'histoire de la rédaction de chaque livre. L'ensemble doit être en effet expliqué à partir de chacun des livres, depuis la strate fondamentale jusqu'à la rédaction finale.

Partant d'éléments significatifs rencontrés dans les titres et introductions et de trois modèles désignés par *dabar*, *maššā'* et *hazon*, déjà repérés par K. Koch en 2000, l'auteur en déduit que la similitude reconnue entre Os 1,1; Jl 1,1; Mi 1,1; Am 1,1 et So 1,1 qui appartiennent au modèle *dabar*, oriente vers l'hypothèse d'un premier recueil de quatre livres: Amos, Osée, Michée, Sophonie. Joël en est exclu parce qu'il y manque une donnée chronologique telle qu'on en trouve dans les autres livres. Les références au règne de Darius en Ag 1,1 et Za 1,1 indiquent des liens très étroits entre ces deux livres, malgré les différences qui apparaissent dans le libellé des introductions. La possibilité d'une collection regroupant les quatre prophètes déjà mentionnés est une nouvelle fois confirmée et, à vrai dire, ce premier regroupement est le seul qui demeure envisageable pour la phase initiale de la constitution du recueil. Ce résultat n'est qu'une indication, mais elle est précieuse car elle oriente la recherche vers les rapports rédactionnels entre ces livres. On remarque également que Joël peut avoir été ajouté à la collection avant d'autres livres. Telle est la voie qui se précise après cette première étape et qui détermine le plan de la suite de l'ouvrage: le livre exilique des quatre prophètes: Osée, Amos, Michée, Sophonie (III^e partie), le corpus Aggée Zacharie (IV^e partie), le corpus Joël: Joël, Amos, Michée, Sophonie (V^e partie).

Chacune des trois parties fait l'objet d'un traitement similaire: il s'agit de restituer l'histoire de la rédaction de chaque livre de la collection envisagée, en prêtant spécialement attention aux strates et refontes susceptibles de préciser la physionomie du regroupement. Remarquons, au passage, que la collecte des résultats les plus récents de la recherche consacrée à l'histoire littéraire de chacun des livres n'est pas le moindre intérêt de ce travail.

Une première partie des résultats porte sur les caractéristiques des trois recueils. Outre la confirmation du bien-fondé de l'hypothèse d'un livre de

quatre prophètes, Osée, Amos, Michée et Sophonie et d'un livre de deux prophètes, Aggée et Zacharie, cette recherche a permis de découvrir que le livre de Joël, contrairement à ce qu'avaient affirmé les chercheurs, n'a pas été intégré après, mais, bien au contraire, avant d'autres livres dans le recueil exilique des quatre prophètes.

Ces premières compilations nous éclairent sur la réception des livres prophétiques à la fin de l'exil et aux tout débuts de la période post exilique. Elles montrent comment fonctionne la référence au message prophétique face aux problèmes sociaux et aux questionnements théologiques qui leur sont liés. À la lumière des livres prophétiques on s'est expliqué sur les causes de l'exil, on s'est demandé ce qu'il en était du peuple et qui en faisait encore partie après l'exil, on s'est interrogé sur l'absence de salut et les causes de la misère économique à l'époque perse. Ainsi l'histoire de la rédaction fait mieux que préciser les étapes de la croissance littéraire de cette compilation. Elle permet de comprendre comment le dépassement théologique des problèmes cruciaux conduit à un ouvrage connu aujourd'hui sous le nom de livre des douze prophètes.

Du recueil exilique des quatre prophètes, on retiendra qu'il propose une relecture de l'histoire depuis Jéroboam II jusqu'à Josias, en se démarquant de l'histoire deutéronomiste à laquelle il emprunte cependant, au point d'en développer une sorte de contre-concept (462). L'époque de Jéroboam II, Ezéchias et Josias, nonobstant pour les deux derniers le jugement positif de l'histoire deutéronomiste, apparaît ainsi comme un temps d'iniquité culturelle et sociale. Les réformes religieuses d'Ezéchias et de Josias (Mi 5,9-13; So 1,4-5) ne sont pas considérées comme des initiatives dont le mérite reviendrait aux rois. Elles relèvent plutôt de la sanction divine, sanction insuffisante d'ailleurs, puisque les pratiques antisociales ne cessent pas et que les élites ne montrent aucun empressement à se convertir (Mi 6,2-15; So 1,6; 2,1-3; 3,1-8). Seule la population pauvre a encore un avenir après la chute du royaume du Sud. Elle constitue le reste légitime d'Israël, puisque Dieu s'engage à éradiquer de la communauté les vantards orgueilleux (So 3,11-13). Il n'est nullement question d'un rétablissement des conditions préexiliques, d'un retour des exilés ou d'une restauration davidique. L'exil apparaît davantage comme un *statu quo* qui ne laisse entrevoir aucun retour. Ce livre des quatre prophètes est né du débat surgi à la fin de l'exil sur l'avenir du peuple lorsque, en raison de la chute de l'empire babylonien, le retour des exilés paraissait possible. On y entend la voix de la population pauvre du pays qui refuse le retour aux conditions préexiliques.

Les livres d'Aggée et de Zacharie sont réunis durant la première moitié du V^e siècle. Ce corpus enregistre les réactions aux expériences décevantes des débuts de la période postexilique, lorsqu'il apparaît que les espérances portées par la prophétie de salut à l'époque de la reconstruction du Temple, sont restées lettre morte. Ces réactions montrent que la construction du

Temple dépend de la conversion du peuple, et que l'attitude de Yahvé dépend également de la constance du peuple dans un effort de conversion.

Le livre des quatre prophètes est transformé dans la première moitié du V^e siècle en un nouveau recueil désigné sous le nom de corpus Joël. Le livre d'Osée en est écarté (450-453). La strate fondamentale du livre de Joël, actuellement placée au début du corpus, sert de guide de lecture aux livres suivants. La situation contemporaine peut être comprise comme l'application de la sanction annoncée dans les livres d'Amos, Michée et Sophonie et comme la suite des iniquités du peuple. Cependant, la miséricorde annoncée offre la possibilité d'échapper au jugement présent en arrière-plan, devant lequel peuvent être lues les paroles de salut insérées par les rédacteurs à la fin des livres suivants. Le but du corpus Joël est aussi d'interpréter les expériences décevantes des débuts de la période post exilique à la lumière de la transmission des écrits prophétiques. Comme pour le corpus Aggée Zacharie, le recours à la prophétie de jugement permet d'expliquer la situation contemporaine et les conditions de la miséricorde divine.

La seconde partie des résultats reprend quelques aspects complémentaires de l'histoire de la composition des recueils. Deux strates provisoirement dites "des nations étrangères" ont été reconnues. En Jl 1-2; 4; Mi 1,2; 4-7; So 2-3; Ag 2 la strate des nations étrangères I envisage un jugement universel condamnant les peuples à la destruction. Le fait que, dans les livres Joël, Amos et Michée, les refontes attribuées à la strate des nations étrangères I soient reconnaissables, pourrait signifier que, dans le cadre d'une composition globale, le corpus Joël et celui d'Aggée-Zacharie ont été regroupés au sein d'un livre de plusieurs prophètes.

Les livres de Joël et Amos ont été soumis, dans une deuxième étape, à une refonte désignée comme strate des nations étrangères II, en Joël 4,4-8.18-21; Am 1,9-12; 9,12-13. Contrairement à la strate des nations étrangères I, les peuples, dans leur ensemble, ne font pas l'objet d'un jugement. Ces additions ne concernent qu'un petit nombre de nations, Tyr, Sidon et Edom, auxquelles sont reprochés des méfaits précis, notamment le trafic de ressortissants du peuple (Jl 4,6-8; Am 1,9). Attribués à cette strate, des propos favorables aux nations ont été insérés en Joël 3,1-5; Mi 4,1-4; 5,6; 7,17; So 3,9-10; Za 2,15-16; 8,20-23.

Une promesse davidique est encore insérée dans les livres d'Amos et Michée, mais Am 9,11.12b et Mi 4,8; 5,1-4 évoquent davantage qu'une simple restauration du pouvoir davidique. On espère surtout que le rétablissement de la souveraineté davidique corresponde au modèle des premiers temps. Deux autres additions, Jl 2,12-14; Mi 7,18-20 sont encore identifiées et attribuées provisoirement à une refonte désignée comme strate de la grâce. On peut les entendre comme une réflexion sur le pardon divin.

En conclusion, nous dirons que cet ouvrage très important se veut exemplaire par la rigueur qu'il impose à sa propre démarche. S'agissant essentiellement d'histoire de la rédaction, il est à prévoir que l'identification et la délimitation des strates ne rencontreront pas de consensus immédiat. On peut également estimer que malgré la rigueur dont il se réclame et dont il fait preuve, cet ouvrage laisse sans solution certaines questions posées par la formation des recueils. On saura toutefois gré à l'auteur d'avoir relevé le défi et d'avoir apporté au chantier exégétique une contribution de haute valeur.

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Novum Testamentum

R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT). Grand Rapids, Michigan – Cambridge, U.K., William B. Eerdmans Publ. Company, 2007. lxiv-1169 p. 16 × 24. \$ 60.00

Richard T. France, dell'Università del Galles con sede a Bangor, concentra in questo massiccio commentario del vangelo di Matteo molti suoi lavori precedenti, soprattutto un primo commento sullo stesso vangelo del 1985 (Leicester) e il volume *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* del 1989 (Exeter). Quanto all'ordine espositivo, l'autore, distanziandosi molto dalla moda dei precedenti commentari, premette solo una breve introduzione generale (22 pagine), lasciando perciò che la soluzione dei molti classici interrogativi risulti dall'esegesi dei singoli passi. L'unico argomento trattato con una certa ampiezza è quello della datazione del vangelo: il France, contro l'*opinio communis* che esso sia da collocare tra l'80 e il '90 del I secolo, qui e in diversi altri punti del testo (cf. soprattutto p. 668 n. 15), ritiene più probabile che Matteo sia stato scritto negli anni '60, prima cioè della distruzione del Tempio. Il volume è dotato di elenchi bibliografici e di accurati indici di ogni tipo.

Quanto alla struttura generale France preferisce rifarsi alle tre fasi narrative di Marco, arricchite soprattutto nei contenuti didattici. L'esame concreto del testo matteoano viene diviso in sei grandi parti, a loro volta suddivise in sottosezioni e pericopi. Il metodo adottato si può riassumere nella formula "dal generale al particolare" (cf. p. xviii); ciò contribuisce molto alla chiarezza espositiva e le poche inevitabili ripetizioni sono del tutto sopportabili. L'esposizione e la discussione delle opinioni di altri studiosi, che ormai sono legione, sono moderate e quasi sempre confinate nelle note; è vero quindi ciò che si afferma nella seconda di copertina, che cioè questo non è un "commentario dei commentari". Un'altra caratteristica del testo di France merita di essere segnalata: contro la tendenza generale manca qui qualsiasi *excursus* dedicato a termini o concetti rilevanti e ricorrenti nel vangelo, come ad esempio "Figlio dell'uomo" o "Chiesa in Matteo" ecc. L'autore preferisce trattarne di volta in volta nel corso dell'esposizione, con richiami interni, forse lasciando al lettore di farne un'ultima sintesi o forse per una certa diffidenza nei confronti di eccessive elaborazioni.

Venendo ora al concreto lavoro sulle varie pericopi, va detto che sotto molti aspetti si tratta di un'opera di notevole livello, molto piacevole da leggere, pur nella sua ampiezza, e accuratissima nei riferimenti, nelle analisi grammaticali e storiche. Balza agli occhi l'intento di essere capito e di spiegare veramente il testo: ciò sembrerà naturale, ma invece non è

affatto ovvio. Questa caratteristica deriva soprattutto da un intento pastorale quasi mai dichiarato, ma facilmente percepibile, dall'uso moderato di termini greci o ebraici che, nel testo, vengono sempre traslitterati e solo nelle note dati in caratteri originali. In secondo luogo ciò deriva dalla pratica ignoranza degli strumenti usuali degli specialisti quali la *Formgeschichte* e la *Quellenkritik* (cf. ad esempio le pp. 138 e 179). La fonte Q non è nominata più di un paio di volte e a p. 21 si afferma addirittura che essa è "an improbably simple hypothesis"! France prescinde poi completamente da quella che l'esegesi tedesca chiama *Wirkungsgeschichte* e anche da questioni di canonicità. Un'altra caratteristica del presente commentario consiste nel fatto di evitare completamente la questione della storicità cioè della verità di ciò che Matteo riferisce, questione che ossessiona gran parte degli studiosi dei vangeli e del cristianesimo primitivo. Il France normalmente ignora il problema, dando chiaramente ad intendere di considerare veritiero ciò che si trova nel vangelo, anche se qualche (rara) volta noi moderni abbiamo difficoltà a capire ciò che esso intende dire. Notevole la sua completa difesa del processo giudaico di Gesù, che, come si sa, viene oggi contestata da sempre più esegeti tedeschi e anglosassoni, normalmente non per motivi esegetici, ma in conseguenza della cosiddetta teologia dopo Auschwitz. Nei pochi casi poi in cui il problema della storicità si impone da sé (ad esempio la data dell'Ultima Cena o l'ora della morte di Gesù) con logica accattivante (il che non vuol dire che essa convincerebbe i molti che oggi negano gran parte della tradizione evangelica) suggerisce soluzioni che non portano mai a contestare la veridicità del racconto matteo. Particolarmente significativo il fatto che France non accenna neanche in nota alle contestazioni di veridicità formulate nei confronti delle tre predizioni di morte e resurrezione fatte da Gesù né tanto meno quelle elevate nei confronti delle sue profezie. Nel complesso l'autore, dal primo all'ultimo versetto, applica l'ottimo principio interpretativo di "prender sul serio il proprio testo" e la tradizione che lo sostiene, contraddicendo *in actu exercito* l'irrazionale tendenza così frequente oggi a criticare il testo evangelico e/o a ricercarne cosiddette contraddizioni o incongruenze, invece di spiegarlo. Interessante, in proposito, un'evidente fiducia data al vangelo di Giovanni in fatto di storicità, anche questo del tutto in controtendenza. Particolare attenzione viene dedicata nel commento alla dimensione della realizzazione delle profezie e più ampiamente dell'AT nelle parole e nelle azioni di Gesù, in continuità con uno studio previo dell'autore stesso del 1971. A nostra conoscenza non ci sono molti altri commentari che mettano così bene in risalto la doppia componente di realizzazione e superamento operata da Gesù nei confronti dell'AT.

Tra gli aspetti problematici o quantomeno degni discussione del presente commentario va notato in primo luogo quello relativo alla bibliografia esplicitamente usata: c'è una quasi totale prevalenza di quella in

lingua inglese e, anche per testi di studiosi non anglofoni, nei rari casi in cui li si usano, si tratta quasi sempre di traduzioni inglesi. È chiaro che il France intende parlare soprattutto a studenti e lettori dell'enorme area linguistica inglese, tuttavia per non poche pericopi e problematiche un confronto con proposte derivanti da testi di autori tedeschi, francesi e italiani avrebbe giovato alla completezza dell'analisi e forse apportato utili aperture. Per la rielaborazione talmudica e midrascica della storia di Gesù, ad esempio, sarebbe stato necessario sfruttare il classico *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung* di J. Maier (Darmstadt 1978). Per il capitolo XIII dedicato alle parabole manca un'elaborazione dei testi di V. Fusco e per le frequenti dispute di Gesù le acquisizioni, a nostro parere molto utili per una cristologia implicita, di J.G. Mudiso Mbâ Mundla e di K. Huber. Ancora in tema di lingua, molte osservazioni poi sono valide solo per un lettore di lingua madre inglese. Questo, per un commentario inserito in una serie dal titolo "New International Commentary of the N.T.", ci pare discutibile. Nel corso di tutta l'esposizione di France poi ci sono troppi richiami interni ad altre opere sue o altrui, che qualche volta rendono il discorso oscuro (cf. p. 4) per chi non ha a disposizione i suoi precedenti studi. Anche il continuo confronto con ciò che egli aveva detto nel proprio commentario del 1985 o nel libro del 1989 alla lunga stucca. Ancora, come abbiamo accennato sopra, l'autore insegue praticamente per tutto il commento il concetto per cui Gesù realizza le profezie dell'AT, intese in senso ampio: ciò è senz'altro giusto e ben esposto, ma non deve essere l'ultima parola sul mistero della persona di Gesù. A nostro parere, pur volendosi limitare al solo Matteo, era necessario dare il dovuto rilievo alle altre dimensioni spesso implicite ma anche esplicite del Nazareno. La decisa riluttanza dell'autore per ciò che egli diverse volte chiama *speculations* gli impediscono di rispondere a domande che anche per il lettore del I secolo saranno state ineludibili: come deve essere concepita una persona generata senza padre fisico, che si permette di contrapporsi a Mosè, che compie miracoli inauditi, che può espiare i peccati dell'umanità, che chiama Dio "mio Padre", che profetizza sulla fine del mondo, che giudicherà tutti gli uomini e così via? Non che nel presente testo manchino del tutto timide risposte e riflessioni spirituali, ma avremmo gradito un'analisi diretta e aperta della principale questione di un vangelo canonico, cioè chi sia veramente Gesù di Nazaret. I vangeli infatti sono in prima istanza scritti teologici.

Alcuni argomenti "caldi" infine vengono trattati, a nostro parere, con eccessiva *nonchalance*.

1) Il pensiero di Gesù su divorzio e seconde nozze viene affrontato due volte, in corrispondenza ai due classici passi matteani (5,31s; 19,1-12). Il France, scavalcando come sempre il problema delle fonti, non si chiede perché Mt ripeta due volte parole di Gesù praticamente uguali sul divorzio.

Né tratta adeguatamente il genere letterario disputa, come premessa ermeneutica per capire e tradurre in pratica ciò che Gesù afferma (cf. sopra). A nostro parere poi egli costruisce la sua spiegazione su alcuni presupposti del tutto arbitrari: che l'adulterio (in Israele, prima di Gesù, necessariamente della sola donna) sciogla il matrimonio non ci consta sia mai stato vero per alcun diritto antico (e neanche moderno, prima di Lutero); dato che al di là di ogni dubbio per il diritto ebraico la donna diventa libera solo mediante l'emissione da parte del marito di un atto di ripudio (*get*) e che viceversa un atto di ripudio confezionato secondo le norme è sempre stato valido per tutte le scuole, l'unica dimensione dell'interrogazione dei farisei può essere solo quella sui motivi di *liceità* dello stesso (ἐξεστίν). È Gesù che inaspettatamente dichiara invece che, davanti a Dio, cioè in verità, il *get* non provoca ciò che afferma, ragion per cui chi si risposasse commette adulterio. Dato infine che un uomo può commettere adulterio con una donna solo se uno dei due è validamente sposato, non si può non dedurre che per Gesù anche la donna munita di regolare *get* in realtà resta moglie di chi emette tale documento. Il France non ricava da Mt 19,9 (e 19,5!) anche un'importantissima novità sul matrimonio: che cioè anche l'uomo commette adulterio nei confronti della propria moglie, cosa inaudita per un giudeo del I secolo. Ciò ha una seconda enorme conseguenza che France non vede nel testo matteoano, che cioè la doppia proibizione di Gesù implica necessariamente la perfetta monogamia, senza la quale la proibizione per il marito non ha senso. In conseguenza del suo principio di spiegare Matteo praticamente senza ricorrere ad un confronto con gli altri testi del NT, l'autore, che ripetutamente sostiene la possibilità del divorzio per adulterio (della sola donna?) non affronta un problema classico: è mai possibile che Marco, Luca e Paolo, venendo a parlare di un tema di tale rilevanza e novità, non riportino un'eccezione all'indissolubilità del matrimonio se questa fosse stata espressa da Gesù? Ci sono diverse altre insufficienze su questo argomento, dovute anche al fatto di aver trascurato gran parte della veramente ingente bibliografia non inglese sulle due pericopi.

2) Commentando a p. 992 la notissima pericope dell'Ultima Cena (26,20-30) France liquida alla stregua di insolubile forse oziosa *querelle* postbiblica la non proprio irrilevante questione del significato del verbo "essere" nelle due frasi sul pane e sul vino come suo corpo e suo sangue. Il riferimento ad alcuni altri testi matteani, ad esempio "il campo è il mondo" (13,38), non tien conto che per l'eucaristia non si tratta di una parabola!

3) Anche la pericope della confessione di Pietro (16,13-20), la cui spiegazione è peraltro accurata e complessa, ha una caduta di stile quando contesta "the claims of the Roman Catholic Church based on the primacy of Peter as the first pope" (p. 622), dato che, secondo France, nulla in questa notissima pericope alluderebbe a "successori" di Pietro. Alla fine però "successori degli apostoli" (p. 1119) vengono tranquillamente introdotti!

4) In diversi punti del testo l'autore afferma decisamente che non ci sono argomenti esegetici che appoggino la convinzione bimillenaria della Chiesa che Maria non abbia avuto altri figli che Gesù. In realtà, proprio per un autore che si diletta di scavare nelle fraseologie matteane alla scoperta di dimensioni nascoste, stupisce che egli ripeta un po' pedissequamente le note difficoltà nei confronti del dogma della perpetua verginità di Maria (cf. pp. 59; 497 n. 7; 549-550). Il lettore interessato potrà vedere con frutto, al di dentro della foltissima bibliografia sull'argomento a partire dal II secolo, quanti e quali indizi esegetici di ciò ci siano nel testo *Die Brüder und Schwestern Jesu* (Stuttgart 1967) di J. Blinzler, che France non sfrutta mai.

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Pasquale BASTA, *Abramo in Romani 4. L'analogia dell'agire divino nella ricerca esegetica di Paolo* (AnBib 168). Roma, Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2007. 316 p. 16,5 × 24. €25

This monograph is the published version of the author's doctoral dissertation defended at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in March 2007 under the direction of Jean-Noël Aletti. As the title suggests, the work addresses the question, "Why does Paul have recourse to the figure of Abraham in Rom 4?" Basta reviews the various proposed answers to this question: the classical Lutheran paradigm (in its various forms), with its emphasis on justification by faith, and more recent views (*new perspective*, sociological and post-Holocaust readings), which tend to highlight instead the ethnic-religious theme of Abraham as father of all believers. In order to evaluate these various readings, Basta studies the rhetorical arrangement (*dispositio*) of Rom 3,21-4,25, illuminating the function of the references to Abraham in Paul's larger argument, and then considers in detail Paul's application of the Hillelite rule of *gezerah shawah* (GS), explaining more specifically the unfolding of Paul's argument in Rom 4,1-12. Indeed, the attention given to explaining Paul's use of GS is the main contribution of this work. From his study, Basta draws out the exegetical consequences and offers suggestions toward the development of a more adequate paradigm for understanding Rom 4. The work consists of four chapters plus a brief introduction (7-12) and a section of conclusions (243-262). The end matter includes abbreviations, bibliography (269-294), indices of authors and of cited texts, and table of contents.

In chapter 1 (13-56), Basta thoroughly reviews the *status quaestionis* concerning Abraham in Rom 4: is the focus of the chapter theological,

anthropological, sociological, ethnic, or ecclesiological? The classical Lutheran paradigm highlights the theological aspect, justification by faith, but within this paradigm, there have been different emphases: the anthropological view which focuses on the role of Abraham in Paul's concept of faith (Bultmann); the typological view which considers Paul the scriptural exegete who establishes a type/antitype relationship between Abraham and the Christian believer (Goppelt); and salvation-historical views (the Wilckens–Klein debate). As a result of the emergence of the *new perspective* (Stendahl, Sanders, Dunn), more attention has been given in recent years to the sociological view of Rom 4: Abraham, freed by Paul from ethnic boundaries and Jewish nationalism, becomes the father of the Gentiles as well as Jews (Hays). Another view considers Rom 4 in light of contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue, thus emphasizing themes such as reconciliation and universalism, and correcting the polemic against Judaism often associated with the classical paradigm. Of course, the classical paradigm itself, having been refined and adjusted in the process of being challenged, continues to be re-proposed with different emphases. Basta does not limit himself to reporting the various interpretations, but also offers an initial assessment, repeatedly stressing the importance of relying on literary criteria so as to respect the truth of Paul's text (e.g., 9, 13, 20, 56).

In chapter 2 (57-115), Basta thus turns to study the literary features and composition of Rom 4. He examines the chapter's vocabulary, phrases, and actors in order to obtain a first indication of its theme, concluding that the main topics seem to be justification and faith (rather than ethnic identity) (60), and that God (not Abraham) is really the main actor (68). Perhaps the work could therefore have been entitled *God and Abraham in Romans 4*; in any case, the sub-title captures well the emphasis on God's activity. With regard to various proposed oral models (chiastic/concentric structures) of Rom 4, Basta concludes that such proposals are somewhat forced and not helpful. Slightly more helpful is the diatribe model, especially for the unit immediately preceding Rom 4, namely 3,27-31. Of much greater utility, especially for understanding the recourse to Abraham in Rom 4, is midrash, since the chapter exhibits various midrashic techniques such as a commentary on a primary text (Gen 15,6) supported by other scriptural texts. Of particular interest is the midrashic use of Jewish rules of interpretation (GS), a topic deferred until chapter 3. The heart of chapter 2 is Basta's consideration of the rhetorical arrangement (*dispositio*) of Rom 4, or more precisely, of the section Rom 3,21-4,25. The progression of Paul's argument can thus be better grasped, so that the function of Rom 4 is understood to be the third and last part of Paul's proof (*probatio*) of the thesis statement (*propositio*) on justification by faith (3,21-22a), which governs the whole section. The first part of this

proof considers facts: what God has done in Christ (3,22b-26); the second part (in the diatribe style) considers principles: the Jewish principles of law and faith (3,27-31); and the third and definitive part is the argument from authority: the recourse to the Scriptures (4,1-25). From his study of the composition, Basta is able to prioritize the different interpretations presented in chapter 1: in an oft-repeated refrain, he indicates that in Rom 4, ethnic considerations always arise from theological considerations as their consequence (e.g., 68, 106, 114). The theological considerations (regarding justification by faith apart from works) are primary, thus supporting the central insight of the classical paradigm rather than the *new perspective* and other recent interpretations.

Chapter 3 (117-182) focuses on the other key aspect of Basta's methodology, his attention to the midrashic background of Rom 4, in particular, Paul's use of GS. The GS is seen in the citations of Gen 15,6 (Rom 4,3; cf. 4,9) and Ps 32,1-2 (Rom 4,7-8), two texts which are linked by the use of the verb λογίζομαι in similar syntactic-semantic constructions (132-133). While scholars ever since Jeremias have noted Paul's use here of Hillel's second *middah*, the rule of verbal analogy, Basta's distinctive contribution is to offer a detailed analysis of the motivation and operation of the GS in Rom 4. On this subject, he draws on recent work, including an article by his *Doktorvater* — J.-N. Aletti, "Romains 4 et Genèse 17. Quelle énigme et quelle solution?", *Bib* 84 (2003) 305-325 — and his own earlier monograph: P. BASTA, *Gezerah Shawah. Storia, forme e metodi dell'analogia biblica* (SubBi 26; Roma 2006). Basta argues convincingly that attention to Paul's use of GS is essential for a proper understanding of Rom 4, since it is by means of the analogical-inferential reasoning of the GS that Paul is able to demonstrate that his thesis in Rom 3,21-22a is biblical, even if not explicitly expressed in any one scriptural passage (123). Indeed, Paul's use of GS stems not from a desire to embellish his text but from the exegetical necessity of demonstrating from Scripture the principle of justification by faith apart from works, applicable to all, circumcised or uncircumcised. In other words, it is in Paul's interrelated use of Gen 15,6 and Ps 32,1-2 that he finds the scriptural basis needed to prove his thesis. Neither text by itself is sufficient since there is a "defective" element in each which is supplied by the other (146-152, 158-161). In this regard, the GS (as Jeremias showed) works both ways: first, Ps 32,1-2 is cited in Rom 4,7-8 to elucidate Gen 15,6 (cited in Rom 4,3) and supply for its lack of reference to works; secondly, Gen 15,6 (which comes before the text on circumcision in Gen 17,9-14) is used again in Rom 4,9 to elucidate Ps 32,1-2 and supply for its lack of applicability to the uncircumcised. With this scriptural argument, Paul shows that God acts in an analogous way throughout history, so that an application can be made to believers in Paul's own time, whether circumcised or uncircumcised. Once again, therefore,

theological considerations (regarding justification by faith) lead to ethnic considerations (Abraham as father of all) (158).

One way to better appreciate the specific contribution made by Basta's work in highlighting Paul's use of GS is to compare it with a monograph having a similar title that appeared about the same time: B. Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith in Romans 4. Paul's Concept of Faith in Light of the History of Reception of Genesis 15:6* (WUNT 2.224; Tübingen 2007). Schliesser's work does indeed dedicate several pages to the GS in Rom 4, but ultimately falls short of fully understanding its importance, seeing it only as an additional and not indispensable support to Paul's argument (Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 313-315 and 350-356, esp. 353, n. 964). As Basta shows, however, without the GS, Paul's argument would have been open to the objections that his interpretation of Gen 15,6 was arbitrary (and contrary to the existing Jewish interpretation of the verse), and that Abraham was really the exception that proves the rule. With the GS, Paul is able to show both that Scripture itself (Ps 32,1-2) supports his reading of Gen 15,6 and that even after the giving of the Law, God continues to justify people (David) in a way analogous to Abraham, on the basis of faith. Perhaps as a result of his incomplete appreciation of the GS, Schliesser describes Paul's exegetical method as typology (Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 404-405, 426-430). In contrast, Basta explains that Paul's exegetical method in Rom 4 depends on the *structural analogy* of the GS rather than on typological correspondences (250). The typological line of interpretation in a sense smelled the perfume of the GS but did not have the adequate tools to grasp it (251; cf. 42).

In chapter 4 (183-241), Basta applies the results of his study of both the rhetorical *dispositio* and Paul's use of GS to an exegesis of Rom 4. He does not attempt a "close reading" of the whole chapter (an operation which, in any case, risks missing the progression of the argumentation), but simply considers key exegetical difficulties in Rom 4 in the light of his earlier results. For example, consideration of the rhetorical function of Rom 4 is helpful for resolving the dispute over the translation of 4,1. Also, the GS is helpful for properly understanding the discussions of Abraham's fatherhood in 4,11-12 (as already noted) and of the promise in 4,13. There are also some weak points in this chapter, however. For example, Basta's reasons for refraining from precisely identifying the groups in 4,11b-12 and 4,16 strike this reviewer as requiring further consideration. Also, this reviewer would have liked to see a little more space dedicated to a nuanced explanation of Jas 2,21-23, which also appeals to Gen 15,6 yet in a way that appears diametrically opposed to Paul's use (194, cf. 122, 150). Moreover, the chapter lacks even a brief conclusion (perhaps because the intent was to subsume it into the section of conclusions that follows). These are relatively minor points, however,

which do not detract from the overall value of the insights into the exegesis of Rom 4 that stem from Basta's attention to the literary-rhetorical composition of the chapter and especially from his detailed analysis of Paul's use of GS.

In his section of conclusions (243-262), Basta returns to consider some of the questions raised earlier regarding the different paradigms and their interpretation of Rom 4, so as to suggest some paths for moving forward. He explains that Rom 4 is above all an argument from authority in support of Paul's teaching on justification by faith (Rom 3,21-22a). Therefore, the primary objective of Paul's recourse to Abraham is not so much to present him as a model of faith to be imitated (contrast Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 393, 410-411), but as the *exemplum* according to which God always acts when it comes to justification (249-250).

In summary, this tightly-knit work is a fine demonstration of the importance for the study of Paul of an exegetical method that traces the rhetorical progression of Paul's argument and is attentive to his reliance on Jewish hermeneutical methods like GS in his use of Scripture. Basta's monograph deserves to receive a wide audience both for its exegetical methodology and for its assistance in sorting through the thicket of diverse readings of Rom 4.

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Leroy A. HUIZENGA, *The New Isaac. Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew* (Sup. to NovT 131; Leiden, Brill 2009) 337 p. €140.

En opposition à bien des spécialistes et commentateurs pour qui Moïse, David et le serviteur souffrant d'Isaïe sont les figures typologiques majeures de Mt, la monographie de L. Huizenga (désormais H.), résultat d'une thèse doctorale défendue en 2006 à la Duke University, se propose de montrer que cette figure majeure est bien plutôt Isaac. Conscient de nager à contre courant, H. va même jusqu'à déclarer que le rôle du serviteur souffrant d'Is et la figure de Moïse, tels que décrits par l'exégèse actuelle, ne sont pas significatifs pour la christologie de Mt. Selon lui, cette méprise vient de ce que l'exégèse dominante est essentiellement déterminée par le *Redaction Criticism* et ne prend en considération ni la tradition juive antérieure et contemporaine de Matthieu, ni la logique narrative du texte matthéen.

Ces déclarations inaugurales fortes ont en quelque sorte obligé H., avant d'analyser les passages où il repère des allusions à Isaac, à commencer son parcours par une réflexion méthodologique et herméneutique. Si l'ouvrage comporte onze chapitres, on peut en réalité y discerner deux grandes parties: une première, méthodologique (ch. 1-5), et une deuxième, exégétique (ch. 6-10), où l'auteur passe en revue les passages mt faisant allusion à Isaac, le ch. 11 reprenant les résultats principaux du parcours en montrant leur importance pour la christologie et la sotériologie mt.

Le ch. 1 (1-20) indique de façon proleptique où H. voit des allusions à Isaac: en Mt 1,1 (l'expression «fils d'Abraham»), en Mt 1,20-21 (cf. Gn 17,19 LXX); en Mt 3,17 et 17,1-8, où la voix céleste déclare Jésus fils bien-aimé (cf. Gn 22,2.12.16); et en Mt 26,36.47.50.55 (cf. le syntagme καθίστατε αὐτοῦ, les substantifs ξύλα et μάχαιρα, l'expression «mettre la/les main(s) sur» en Gn 22,5.6.12 LXX). Si pour H. les allusions sont dans un premier temps repérables grâce aux chaînes lexicales à peine relevées, cela ne lui suffit pas, car il importe aussi, au niveau narratif, de prendre en considération les scènes analogues à celles de Gn 22, comme lorsqu'à la transfiguration et à Gethsémani Jésus prend trois des disciples avec lui, va prier, sur une montagne, et s'en remet à la volonté de Dieu. On objectera sans doute qu'en Gn 22, c'est Abraham et non Isaac qui obéit. Mais la tradition juive intertestamentaire, sans aucun doute connue de Matthieu, faisait d'Isaac un jeune homme prêt à s'offrir en sacrifice (4Mac 13,12.20; Flavius Josèphe, *Ant* 1,224-226; *L.A.B.* 32,3), et identifiait la montagne de Gn 22 avec celle du Temple de Jérusalem (Flavius Josèphe, *Ant* 1,228-232). Il est donc important, lorsqu'on s'interroge sur les citations et allusions bibliques en Mt – et le NT en général – de ne pas oublier la lecture de l'AT faite par les traditions juives du Second Temple (ch. 4 et 5; 75-95, 97-128). Ajoutons que H. utilise les traditions juives avec prudence, parfaitement conscient des questions de datation (en particulier celle de 4Mac et *L.A.B.*). Pour appuyer sa thèse, il évite d'utiliser les présentations de l'Aqedah faites dans la littérature targumique et rabbinique, l'évidence fournie par les autres documents plus anciens étant assez forte pour montrer que les aspects essentiels de l'Aqedah émergent avant même le christianisme primitif. Il reproche d'ailleurs aux exégètes qui minimisent l'importance de l'Aqedah en Mt d'en avoir restreint les composantes, en ne retenant que l'être-lié d'Isaac sur l'autel (Gn 22,9), le verbe עקד («lier») et le substantif עקדה n'étant utilisés par les écrits rabbiniques qu'à partir de la période mishnaïque. Or, si l'on ne trouve ni le verbe ni le substantif dans les écrits juifs de la période du Second Temple, certaines composantes éthiques essentielles y sont déjà fortement mises en valeur: l'offrande volontaire qu'Isaac fait de lui-même à Dieu (4Q225), son obéissance active, sa piété, le lieu choisi

(la montagne de Sion, dès 2Chr 3,1; Jub 18,13), le lien établi entre l'Aqedah et la Pâque.

En plus des deux principes déjà énoncés (l'importance des chaînes lexicales et la prise en considération de la tradition juive intertestamentaire), H. insiste sur la nécessité, pour trouver l'*intentio textus*, de lire le récit pour ce qu'il est, à savoir un récit. Recourant aux catégories d'U. Eco, en particulier celle de lecteur modèle («lettore modello», *Lector in fabula*, 1979; ch. 3, 43-74), autrement dit compétent, il montre bien que le *Redaction Criticism* peine très souvent à repérer les allusions typologiques parce qu'il fait trop peu de cas de la dynamique des récits évangéliques (ch. 2, 21-41). Si l'appellatif «fils d'Abraham» de Mt 1,1 ne suffit pas de soi à indiquer une allusion à Isaac, les vocables Mt 1,20-21 et des chapitres suivants, comme cela a été indiqué plus haut, ainsi que les éléments sémantiques communs à Mt et à la tradition juive contemporaine, ont un effet cumulatif, ce que H. appelle le principe de cohérence, repérable grâce à l'effet rétroactif de la lecture: s'il y a par ex. une allusion à Gn 22,5-6 en Mt 26,36 et 26,47.55, alors des passages antérieurs, comme Mt 3,13-17 (le baptême de Jésus), 12,15-21 (citation d'Is 42 contenant l'appellatif ἀγαπητός) et 17,1-8 (la transfiguration) peuvent aussi renvoyer à Gn 22; et réciproquement. De proche en proche le lecteur peut ainsi constater que le récit Mt décrit et présente Jésus comme le nouvel Isaac. S'il accepte les critères proposés par Hays dans *Echos of Scripture*, H. les adapte quelque peu, montrant que pour identifier un texte vétérotestamentaire auquel Mt fait allusion, il ne faut pas minimiser le flot des traditions et interprétations existant entre les Écritures anciennes et l'utilisation qu'en fait Mt, car ce dernier a été influencé par les traditions juives qui l'ont précédé.

Comme déjà dit, les ch. 6-10 (129-261) fournissent les preuves exégétiques de la thèse défendue (Jésus, nouvel Isaac) et forment un mixte de *confirmatio* et de *refutatio*, cette dernière consistant en une critique de la position de la majorité des exégètes sur la typologie Mt. Suivant le déroulé de l'évangile, de Mt 1 (ch. 6, 129-151) à Mt 26 (ch. 10, 237-261), en passant par Mt 3,13-17 (ch. 7, 153-187) et Mt 17,1-8 (ch. 9, 209-235), H. décrit le fonctionnement de l'intertextualité Mt. Pour Mt 1,18-25 (en particulier 1,20-21//Gn 17,19 LXX), il montre bien que le passage ne reprend pas seulement les formules des récits de naissance de l'AT (la suite enfanter-appeler-nom; cf. Gn 16,11; 17,19; 29,32-35; 30,20-21; Is 7,14; Lc 1,13.31), car Isaac et Jésus sont l'un et l'autre deux objets de promesse, Sarah et Marie étant quant à elles des mères hors normes. Pour le baptême de Jésus, il critique le consensus exégétique selon lequel la voix divine au baptême reprend le Ps 2,7 et Is 42,1; à son avis, les commentateurs n'ont pas vu «the extensive verbal correspondence shared between the Matthean heavenly baptismal voice and Gen 22» (158). Le ch. 8 (189-208) est une *refutatio* de la

typologie du «serviteur souffrant» que l'exégèse contemporaine prête à Mt; en effet, dans la tradition juive extrabiblique de l'époque, la figure de Serviteur souffrant n'est pas nettement configurée, et elle est au demeurant plutôt collective; H. rappelle aussi que dans le texte grec du dernier chant (Is 52,13–53,12), la mort du serviteur n'est pas mentionnée. Dans le targum d'Is également, il n'est pas question de souffrances pour le serviteur identifié au Messie. En bref, dans les écrits juifs intertestamentaires, la figure du Serviteur souffrant du 4^e chant n'est pas exploitée. Et H. de conclure qu'étant donné cette situation, si Mt avait voulu développer une typologie du Serviteur souffrant, il aurait dû davantage utiliser ce passage d'Is. Toujours selon notre auteur, la formule d'accomplissement et la citation d'Is en Mt 8,17 ont avant tout pour fonction d'enraciner les guérisons de Jésus dans les Écritures (199). Quant aux récits de la Passion (ch. 10, 237–261), ils n'insistent pas sur l'être-lié sur la croix de Jésus, mais sur l'offrande de lui-même pour nous (à la dernière cène), sur son obéissance (à Gethsémani) et le rapport à la Pâque, suivant probablement en cela les traditions juives relatives à l'offrande expiatoire d'Isaac.

S'interrogeant sur le rôle d'Isaac dans la sotériologie de Mt, H. pense que la présentation de Jésus comme un nouvel Isaac est au service (i) de la thématique du rapport de Jésus au Temple, et plus précisément de Jésus comme remplaçant le Temple, (ii) de la sotériologie Mt.

Que penser des positions exprimées en cette monographie dense et nerveuse? Disons d'abord que la *refutatio* bien menée de H. a pour effet de mettre à mal la typologie du serviteur souffrant en Mt et de montrer qu'elle n'est pas aussi fondée qu'on l'a dit. On pourrait certes objecter que si Mt multiplie les citations d'accomplissement, s'il explique donc avec autant d'insistance que le personnage Jésus accomplit les prophéties de l'AT, il importe de montrer pourquoi il ne procède pas de même pour la typologie Isaac/Jésus. Si elle est aussi importante que l'affirme H., pourquoi reste-t-elle en quelque sorte dans l'ombre, réservée à un lecteur compétent très au fait des traditions juives sur l'Aqedah? Car on aurait alors une double technique Mt: (i) la première, explicite, par accumulation de citations, pour les ignorants ou les imbéciles (la majorité), et (ii) la deuxième, implicite, pour quelques lecteurs cultivés de son temps (et d'origine juive). H. ignore cette objection, mais il aurait pu y répondre. Notons en effet que les citations d'accomplissement relatives à Jésus finissent en Mt 21,4 (celle de 26,56 concerne Judas). Certes, comme le déclare Jésus lui-même lors de son arrestation, sa Passion et sa mort accomplissent les Écritures (26,54), néanmoins les épisodes suivants, qui vont de l'arrestation à la mort en croix, ne font aucune citation explicite des Écritures, et, étant donné le caractère ignominieux et scandaleux de cette mort, des citations auraient été les bienvenues pour fournir au lecteur des clefs de lecture. Non que le narrateur Mt ne trouve ni ne fournisse un éclairage biblique; ces épisodes

en sont pleins de motifs bibliques qui renvoient massivement aux supplications individuelles du juste persécuté, en particulier au Ps 21/22, mais ce ne sont que des allusions, comme pour la typologie Isaac/Jésus. Il faut donc bien se rendre à l'évidence: Mt utilise des citations explicites, mais procède aussi par allusions. Comment rendre compte de cette double procédure? Une réponse peut encore être formulée: (i) Mt cite explicitement l'Écriture lorsqu'il veut montrer à ceux qui l'ont rejeté que Jésus est bien le messie attendu, par ses origines, ses paroles et ses actions. (ii) En revanche, sur les autres composantes de l'identité de Jésus (fils et innocent injustement persécuté), il procède par allusions, fidèle à cet égard aux techniques de l'époque, où les allusions avaient un rôle important et où l'on jugeait de la valeur d'un écrivain à sa manière d'en faire avec finesse et discrétion. En d'autres termes, Mt est beaucoup plus subtil et diversifié dans ses analepses bibliques qu'on ne pourrait le penser.

Dernier point à souligner. S'il insiste sur la typologie Isaac/Jésus parce qu'elle est ignorée de l'exégèse dominante, H. admet néanmoins plusieurs fois qu'elle n'est pas la seule à l'œuvre dans le récit Mt, car Jésus n'accomplit pas qu'une seule figure biblique et la typologie de Mt n'est pas davantage monocolore. Mais il rappelle très justement que les questions typologiques sont celles où le manque de rigueur semble malheureusement prévaloir. Ainsi, qu'il y ait une typologie exodale en Mt ne signifie pas nécessairement que Jésus est le nouveau Moïse (D.C. Allison Jr, *The New Moses. A Matthean Typology* [Minneapolis 1993]). L'exégèse typologique du NT doit encore progresser dans ses principes méthodologiques et herméneutiques. La monographie de L. Huizenga l'y invite fermement et efficacement.

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Matthew J. Goff, *Discerning Wisdom*. The Sapiential Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls (VTS 116). Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2007. xv-372 p. 16 × 24,5 €119 - \$170

This is Matthew Goff's second monograph on the Qumran wisdom literature after the published version of his Yale dissertation on 4QInstruction which appeared in 2003. In the book under review here Goff offers the most comprehensive and thorough treatment of the wisdom texts found at Qumran available to date. The volume comprises an introduction, ten chapters dealing with the Qumran wisdom texts followed by a conclusion, bibliography, and indices of authors and texts. The volume is extremely well structured and includes a clear and user-friendly table of contents.

The Introduction sets out the parameters that informed his choice of texts to be included in this project. In particular Goff was guided by the texts': 'pedagogical intent', 'thematic affinity', the presence of 'key phrases and motifs', and 'innovation in the wisdom tradition' (5). The only place in this otherwise convincing methodological footing where I felt slightly uneasy is his rather rigid distinction between wisdom in the Hebrew Bible and early Jewish wisdom literature and the related quest to identify the extent to which the new Qumran texts testify to development towards early Jewish wisdom. The categories of biblical and early Jewish wisdom literature are based on the different routes that brought these texts to us. It is not to be taken for granted that features absent from biblical wisdom but present in the Qumran texts and early Jewish wisdom are necessarily new developments or 'innovations'. We should at least be open to the possibility that some of the 'new developments' may have been current but not favoured by the circles that gave the Hebrew Bible its shape. It is always helpful to try and trace developments reflected in our sources, and Goff does this very ably and with a good deal of subtlety. It seems a mistake, however, to assume – even by implication – that all the pieces of evidence we have necessarily reflect a neat development.

Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the two most substantial wisdom compositions from Qumran (Instruction and the Book of Mysteries) and make up about one third of the book. Chapter 1 offers a comprehensive discussion of the issues that have emerged in the interpretation of 4QInstruction. It includes a superb discussion of what is perhaps the most central concept in this text: the *raz nihyeh* or 'mystery to be'. Goff's extensive discussion of this concept lays out very clearly the multifaceted range of contexts that allude to the mystery in this text by drawing attention

to the following aspects of its employment: judgment, 'soteriological knowledge', a family setting, farming, and 'pedagogical mysteries' (13-28). He also reviews the position that the mystery is to be identified with the Torah advocated by Armin Lange noting the scarcity of firm evidence to support the latter view (28-29). This is followed by a discussion of the 'vision of Hagu'. Here Goff stresses the rather localized references to this concept in this text and observes, "4QInstruction is more interested in the issue of access to the vision of Hagu than its content" (33). Particularly commendable also is the full discussion of the intended audience of 4QInstruction (which includes farmers, skilled crafts persons, and servants as well as women) and its 'social location' (53) noting the curious link of poverty and elect status. As far as its relation to the Qumran community is concerned Goff is sympathetic to the view that 4QInstruction was read and treasured at Qumran rather than composed there and favours a second century BCE date for its composition. His discussion of matters of date rightly takes note of the recent arguments by Jodi Magness in support of a communal settlement of the Qumran site in the early first century BCE (66, see also 101). It does not necessarily follow, as Goff seems to assume, that the community's emergence coincided with its initial settlement at the site of Qumran. It is entirely possible, by contrast, that the texts reflect a community that emerged in the second century which, on archaeological grounds, came to settle at Khirbet Qumran in the early first century BCE. The old consensus view on Qumran origins had proposed a contemporaneous withdrawal to Qumran at the inception of the Yachad. There are no firm indications in the texts that disallow conceiving of the emergence of a community prior to its settlement at Qumran.

In Chapter 2 Goff turns to Mysteries and begins by endorsing recent scepticism about J. T. Milik's identification of 4Q301 as a manuscript of Mysteries. The chapter further treats, *inter alia*, the notion of a dramatic future intervention in the course of history, determinism, and the antagonistic attitude displayed towards 'magicians', a group who thought themselves privy to revelation (84). Goff stresses the close relationship between Mysteries and Instruction (while also noting a number of subtle differences, cf. 101-102) and advocates a second century BCE date for the former as well.

Chapter 3 deals with 4Q184 (Wiles of the Wicked Woman) and covers issues such as the texts supposed and actual erotic undertones, the development of the theme of darkness with reference to the female figure, and misogyny. Goff closes his treatment of this text by concluding that, "4Q184 transforms the Strange Woman from an alluring and dangerous married woman into a mythological figure of evil" (121). Chapter 4 treats 4Q185 (Sapiential Work) and highlights the central role given to the Torah in the context of the acquisition of wisdom in this text. Chapter 5 is

devoted to 4Q298 (Words of the Maskil to the Sons of Dawn) which Goff identifies with some justification as a “rare example of a wisdom text that can be attributed plausibly to the Dead Sea sect” (159). In Chapter 6 Goff’s discussion of 4Q420-421 (Ways of Righteousness) also notes some close links to the sectarian literature most likely indicating a sectarian adaptation of an existing wisdom text. This text is unique among the Qumran sapiential literature since it incorporates a number of fragments that overlaps with the halakhic composition 4Q264a (Halakhah B) as noted by E. J. C. Tigchelaar. 4Q424 (Instruction-Like Composition B) is the subject of chapter 7. This work shares with 4QInstruction an interest in ensuring appropriate conduct in financial and business dealings although Goff stresses, like others before him, that the envisaged addressees are people of means and influence with no immediate existential worries. Chapter 8 discusses 4Q512 (Beatitudes), a text that has attracted considerable interest because “4Q525 2 ii + 3 1-6 provides a rare example of a sequence of beatitudes in Hebrew” (202). Goff suggests associating this text with a privileged scribal milieu. Chapter 9 is devoted to wisdom psalms in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls. It begins with a critical overview over the issue of identifying wisdom psalms in the Hebrew Bible followed by a treatment of the Cave 11 Psalms Scroll from Qumran (11QPsa). Finally, chapter 10 groups together a selection of “Minor Wisdom Texts”: 4Q302 (papAdmonitory Parable), 4Q303-305 (Meditation on Creation A-C), 4Q412 (Sapiential-Didactic Work A), 4Q413 (Composition Concerning Divine Providence), 4Q419 (Instruction-Like Composition A), 4Q425 (Sapiential-Didactic Work B), the 4Q411 (Sapiential Hymn), 4Q426 (Sapiential Hymnic Work A), and 4Q528 (Ouvrage hymnique ou sapientiel B).

An excellent Conclusion offers a perceptive and nuanced evaluation of the overall contribution of the Qumran wisdom texts to the wider Jewish wisdom tradition. Here Goff assess ‘Correspondences’, ‘Absences’, and ‘Departures’ as well as the issues of ‘Function and Milieu’ and ‘Genre’.

The Qumran wisdom corpus, mostly published within the last two decades, has generated a great deal of scholarly interest already. Goff’s systematic, well-written, and judicious treatment of all the texts at some length between the covers of one book is an extremely valuable addition to this growing body of literature. It will be used by scholars as well as offering an excellent course book for teachers. It can only be hoped that an affordable paperback edition will appear without too much delay.

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Louis H. FELDMAN, *Philo's Portrayal of Moses in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Series 15). Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 2007. xix-542 p. 16 × 23,5. \$80.00.

Noto al pubblico per i suoi studi su Flavio Giuseppe, L.H. Feldman si cimenta per la prima volta in modo organico con un'opera di Filone di Alessandria, il *De vita Mosis*, e ci offre una monografia, in cui i tratti della figura mosaica, disegnata da Filone, si ricompongono in un ampio affresco, che si arricchisce di sfumature nel confronto con i testi del giudaismo di epoca ellenistico-romana e del coevo mondo greco e latino.

Nelle pagine introduttive (1-33) l'autore discute alcune questioni preliminari riguardanti il *De vita Mosis*, individuando il contesto culturale, il genere letterario, lo scopo e il pubblico, a cui l'opera è indirizzata. Mosè è uno dei personaggi biblici più noti al mondo non giudaico, oggetto di interpretazioni contrastanti da parte di autori pagani, che l'Alessandrino non cita mai, ma che certamente conosce, come quell'A-pione, filologo omerico, capo della delegazione antiggiudaica inviata a Roma dall'imperatore Caligola. Il *De vita Mosis* si inquadra proprio in questo *milieu* culturale e, dunque, per Feldman si tratta di un'opera che si rivolge in modo prioritario a un pubblico non giudaico e che persegue uno scopo fondamentalmente apologetico (cfr. *Mos.* 1,1-2; 2,12-14.25-44). Feldman ripropone un'opinione tradizionale negli studi filoniani, senza recepire alcune istanze critiche, che negli ultimi decenni sono emerse da più fronti. Infatti, fermo restando il clima di controversia in cui l'opera si inserisce, il *De vita Mosis* non presenta diffusi toni polemici, né ribatte ad accuse più o meno circostanziate; si configura, piuttosto, come una biografia autorevole di Mosè, destinata probabilmente *in primis* al pubblico giudaico, forse non a quella élite colta, cui sono indirizzati i trattati allegorici, ma a una cerchia più ampia di lettori, come l'*Esposizione della Legge*, che condivide con il *De vita Mosis* un uso molto contenuto dell'allegoria. Anche nell'ambito della scuola la disamina della vita di Mosè poteva costituire una valida introduzione all'approfondimento della Legge giudaica, così come nelle scuole filosofiche greche si era soliti studiare la biografia del fondatore, prima di affrontare la lettura e il commento delle sue opere (cfr. A.C. Geljon, *Philonian Exegesis in Gregory of Nyssa's De vita Moysis* [Providence 2002] 31). Quanto al genere letterario, Feldman ritiene che il *De vita Mosis* sia un'aretologia e un encomio. La scelta di questi due generi presta il fianco a molti rilievi critici: non solo la definizione di aretologia come genere letterario sembra essere alquanto inconsistente (R.A. Burrige, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* [Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge 2004] 16-19), ma, come riconosce Feldman stesso, il *De vita Mosis* tende

a deenfattizzare alcuni elementi aretalogici, quali i miracoli e lo *status* divino di Mosè. Non più appropriata mi sembra l'inserzione nel genere dell'encomio, perché l'opera non ha le dimensioni di un ἐπιδεικτικὸς λόγος e non si avvale della σύγκρισις. Seguendo il titolo e le indicazioni fornite da Filone, il *De vita Mosis* appartiene al genere della biografia (il termine βίος compare all'inizio e alla fine dell'opera: *Mos.* 1,1 e 2,292; cfr. anche *Virt.* 52) e, viste le proporzioni e l'impostazione, confina con il trattato filosofico, come ha bene evidenziato V. Nikiprowetzky (*Le commentaire de l'Écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie. Son caractère et sa portée. Observations philologiques* [ALGHJ 11; Leiden 1977] 196). Feldman afferma che Filone, nel primo libro del *De vita Mosis*, segue uno schema peripatetico-plutarceo, poiché dispone i dati biografici in linea cronologica e fa emergere dalle azioni di Mosè le sue qualità regali, mentre il secondo libro, dedicato alle virtù di Mosè, è organizzato *per species*, secondo un modello che sarà seguito da Svetonio, ma che è già presente nell'*Agesilao* di Senofonte. Ma forse, seguendo la dettagliata analisi di R.A. Burridge (*What Are*, 128-149) si potrebbe pensare l'impostazione dell'opera in modo più organico: Filone usa un *framework* cronologico (genealogia, nascita, educazione di Mosè e morte), mentre all'interno della biografia seleziona gli episodi secondo un criterio contentutistico, ponendo in risalto il ruolo di re-filosofo (primo libro), di legislatore, di sommo sacerdote e di profeta (secondo libro). In quanto βίος, il *De vita Mosis* si piega a scopi diversi: Filone delinea un ritratto paradigmatico, implicitamente encomiastico, che possiede anche risvolti apologetici e, nel contempo, è veicolo di informazioni e di insegnamenti filosofico-religiosi. Tra gli elementi che connotano l'impostazione narrativa del *De vita Mosis*, Feldman sottolinea che l'Alessandrino si attiene abbastanza fedelmente al testo biblico (Flavio Giuseppe nelle *Antiquitates Judaicae* è molto più libero), non menziona per nome alcun personaggio che viene a contatto con Mosè, per conferire maggiore rilievo alla figura del protagonista, e ricorre all'allegoria solo in modo episodico.

Seguendo il percorso del *De vita Mosis*, l'autore dedica la seconda sezione del suo libro (35-233) alla biografia mosaica, presentando in modo analitico ciascun episodio e offrendo un ampio ventaglio di paralleli tratti dagli apocrifi, dai pseudepigrafi, dagli storiografi giudaico-ellenistici, da Giuseppe, dalla letteratura qumranica e rabbinica e dalla tradizione samaritana. Feldman spesso accosta al *De vita Mosis* la citazione di altre opere filoniane e, in genere, il ricorso a queste è inversamente proporzionale all'ampiezza con cui un determinato episodio è affrontato nella biografia filoniana. Proprio in questo minuzioso lavoro di confronto risiede uno degli aspetti più apprezzabili della monografia di Feldman, che con competenza individua i dettagli più significativi del resoconto filoniano, valutandone di volta in volta l'impostazione, le convergenze e le differenze rispetto alle

altre fonti disponibili. È possibile, così, rilevare una serie di procedimenti che caratterizzano la “riscrittura” filoniana.

L’Alessandrino a volte omette qualche episodio, che può gettare discredito su Mosè, come la menzione della lebbra in Es 4,6 (*Mos.* 1,79) o la mancanza di fede a Meriba (Num 20,10-12 = *Mos.* 1,210-211). In questo atteggiamento selettivo si percepisce la volontà di Filone di offrire un ritratto “ufficiale” di Mosè, epurato dei particolari sconvenienti, e affiora la consapevolezza di alcune infamanti accuse che circolavano contro Mosè in ambito pagano. Un riscontro è fornito da Giuseppe, che, come Filone, evita di menzionare la lebbra nel miracolo della mano (*A.J.* 2,273), perché Manetone riteneva che Mosè avesse contratto questa terribile malattia e per questo fosse stato espulso dall’Egitto (*Ap.* 1,279; cfr. anche Lisimaco in *Ap.* 1,304-311). In alcuni frangenti Filone cerca di migliorare la logica del racconto biblico: è il caso delle piaghe (*Mos.* 1,94-146), che l’Alessandrino presenta in ordine diverso, secondo una *climax* crescente che vede coinvolti sia gli agenti (Aronne, Mosè, Aronne e Mosè, Dio), sia gli elementi cosmici impiegati (terra e acqua, aria e fuoco, animali ed esseri umani). Filone, inoltre, tende a razionalizzare gli eventi miracolosi, offrendo delle spiegazioni accettabili: ad esempio, riguardo alla piaga delle tenebre (*Mos.* 1,123-125), sostiene che tale fenomeno può essere provocato da un’eclissi di sole totale o da una massa di nubi, particolarmente dense, che non fanno filtrare i raggi solari. Frequentemente i vuoti narrativi del testo biblico sono colmati in modo da rendere più convincente il ritratto del protagonista: l’Alessandrino rileva la bellezza di Mosè (*Mos.* 1,15), si sofferma a lungo sulla sua educazione, a cui collaborano i migliori maestri egiziani, greci e orientali (*Mos.* 1,21-24), esalta le eccezionali doti morali e intellettuali, che Mosè mostra già da fanciullo (*Mos.* 1,25-29), aggiunge delle motivazioni a episodi che nella Bibbia sono privi di spiegazione (l’uccisione dell’egiziano è dovuta alla sua ferocia: *Mos.* 1,43-44), formula discorsi (*Mos.* 1,244-245), che conferiscono vivacità alla narrazione. Molte volte Filone ascrive a Mosè azioni che la Bibbia attribuisce a Dio, per porre in risalto il suo ruolo di *leader*: è lui che determina dove accamparsi, come procedere nel viaggio (*Mos.* 1,164), come affrontare i nemici, a lui spetta la decisione di mandare esploratori in Canaan (*Mos.* 1,220-221). Non mancano alcuni particolari che mostrano la tendenza di Filone ad attualizzare: ad esempio, il vitello d’oro è designato con il termine ταῦρος, che richiama Apis e il culto di Serapide, molto popolare nell’Egitto ellenistico, e l’Alessandrino sfrutta questo espediente per condannare l’idolatria, che consiste nell’adorazione di esseri irrazionali, stigmatizzando la depravazione della religione egizia, che si pone in antitesi con il giudaismo (*Mos.* 2,161-162). Nell’episodio di Balaam emerge l’abilità filoniana di riplasmare il testo biblico (*Mos.* 1,263-299) in funzione di un confronto tra la divinazione pagana e la profezia giudaica: mentre il μάντις si limita ad avere delle visioni e non

riesce a comprendere ciò che profetizza, Mosè si profila come autentico mediatore (προφήτης), che gode di un rapporto privilegiato con Dio e dispone di uno spirito profetico, che non annulla la sua razionalità. Per questo i giudei non hanno bisogno di presagi e di tecniche divinatorie: essi hanno fede in Dio, che è il Signore del mondo, e godono della sua protezione (*Mos.* 1,284). Nell'interpretare gli oracoli di Balaam, poi, Filone precisa da un lato che i giudei sono una nazione che si distingue per i propri costumi (*Num* 23,9 = *Mos.* 1,278) e dall'altro lascia nel vago la profezia messianica di *Num* 24,17 (*Mos.* 1,290-291), per non suscitare reazioni anti-romane.

La terza parte della monografia di Feldman (235-357) tratta, prima, le virtù di Mosè e, poi, le sue funzioni (legislatore, re, sacerdote, teologo, inventore, mago, ecc.). In questa sezione l'autore segue solo parzialmente la traccia del secondo libro del *De vita Mosis* che, sulla base di una serie di riferimenti biblici, sviluppa il ruolo di legislatore, di sacerdote e di profeta, e per questo si infittiscono le citazioni riprese dall'intero *corpus* delle opere dell'Alessandrino, mentre continua il consueto confronto con la letteratura giudaica. Feldman rileva che Filone conferisce a Mosè il profilo del re-filosofo di ascendenza platonica, che incarna le quattro virtù cardinali ed eccelle nella pietà, la regina delle virtù; pur asserendo l'origine divina della Legge, Filone ritiene che Mosè non sia un semplice trasmettitore della Torah, ma un legislatore in grado di imprimere sulle leggi il sigillo della propria sapienza. In quanto re, secondo i canoni dell'ideologia ellenistica e romana, Mosè esercita anche le funzioni sacerdotali, riceve direttamente da Dio l'iniziazione ai misteri e la conoscenza dei riti e ciò implica un ridimensionamento del ruolo di Aronne nella "riscrittura" filoniana. Come profeta, Mosè gode di una relazione unica di intimità con Dio e l'ispirazione non lo rende un soggetto passivo. Secondo Feldman l'Alessandrino non enfatizza il ruolo di Mosè come mediatore di rivelazione (in linea con Flavio Giuseppe), né come inventore di beni di civiltà (a differenza di Artapano), elimina ogni connessione con la magia e ogni risvolto messianico; in genere Mosè è in grado di compiere dei miracoli solo in quanto agente di Dio e, pur essendo esaltato per la perfezione della sua virtù e pur godendo di una relazione speciale con Dio, è chiaro che nella prospettiva filoniana, Mosè non è un essere divino, ma un uomo che ha il merito e la grazia di definirsi a pieno titolo "amico di Dio".

Un limite che si può rilevare nella monografia di Feldman riguarda l'ordine espositivo di molti paragrafi: infatti, dopo la guerra contro Amalek (*Es* 17,8-16 = *Mos.* 1,214-219), l'autore si discosta dal *De vita Mosis* e inserisce la visita di Ietro (*Es* 18) e la rivelazione sinaitica, che mancano nella biografia filoniana, passando poi all'episodio del vitello d'oro che, Filone colloca nel secondo libro, e continuando con episodi tratti ora dal primo, ora dal secondo libro fino ad arrivare alla morte di Mosè. In questo itine-

rario Feldman tende a riprodurre, con alcune eccezioni, l'ordine presente nel testo biblico, ma così facendo trascura la selezione operata da Filone e non aiuta il lettore a comprenderne i criteri ispiratori. Lo stesso limite è presente nella parte riguardante le virtù mosaiche, perché la topica filoniana viene frammentata in una molteplicità di virtù e di funzioni, che alterano il ritratto più compatto che l'Alessandrino costruisce nel secondo libro del *De vita Mosis*.

L'opera di Feldman è corredata di un'ampia conclusione, che sintetizza i dati acquisiti, di una ricca bibliografia e di indici.

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